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HOME,

OR

THE IRON RULE.

A DOMESTIC STORY.

BY SARAH STICKNEY,

AUTHOR OF
"THE POETRY OF LIFE;" "PICTURES OF PRIVATE LIFE, &c.

"There is a great deal of difference between a good man and a good father: I have known bad men who excelled my father as much in parental care, as he was superior to them in real virtue."

LORD LYTTLETON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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HOME,

OR

THE IRON RULE.

CHAPTER I.

"When shall we go away from this dull place, I wonder," said Elliott Lee, a fine high-spirited youth, just ten years old, to his mother, who vainly endeavoured to recommend the patient endurance of a long-promised visit to her friends,—the Greys of Welbourne.

"We shall leave on Tuesday morning," said his mother; "Will that satisfy you?"

"Not at all," replied the disconsolate boy, "for to-morrow is Sunday, the day we spend so happily at home; and here, I suppose, we

shall all have to sit still, on high stools, without backs; for Mary tells me, they are not even allowed to run on Sundays."

In spite of his discontent, Elliott could not help laughing at the idea of a family of six children, restrained from running, through the whole of one day; but his mirth was prudently checked, by his mother reminding him how much happier and better it was to try to find out some good in the peculiarities of our friends, than to laugh at, and despise them.

"But, where can be the good," asked the querulous boy, "of sitting still all Sunday, as if our limbs were not given us to be used?"

"When you have had as much experience in the management of children, as those whom you are so ready to condemn," replied Mrs. Lee, "you will know that a great deal of violence, disorder, and riot, when inquired into, is apt to be excused by the answer, 'I was only running;' and this has most probably led to the adoption, in many schools and

serious families, of the rule you think so useless and absurd: just as many laws are necessarily laid down for the restraint of the public as a body, which would never have been needed for individuals living separately."

"But when I have children to manage," said Elliott, little reconciled to the state of things around him, "I will make them *love* order, and quiet, and obedience, and then they may run on Sundays, and commit no sin."

"You will do the wisest thing in the world, my dear, if you do this," said Mrs. Lee, kissing the cheek of her son; "and now go to your pillow, and think of to-morrow morning —that however the institution of the sabbath may be abused, or misinterpreted, through the ignorance or prejudice of mankind, it is not the less incumbent upon those who think they see more clearly, so to occupy this day, as to promote the glory and honour of a gracious Creator, whose service is never faithfully performed when we forget to cultivate feelings of

good will and charity towards our fellow creatures. Now go, my love. Good night, once more ; and let to-morrow morning find you less disposed to pry into the faults and failings of the kind friends around you."

Elliott bid his mother good night, and turned away; but ere he left the room he could not help murmuring, that he did not think they were so very kind.

"Elliott, for shame," said his mother in her sternest voice. "Are we not daily giving trouble to the whole family, and poor Mrs. Grey so ill—and did not Mary run all the way to the village the other day, to bring you a fishing line, because Allan had broken yours?"

"Oh yes, mother, I had forgotten Mary; she is always kind."

"And Allan?"

"He is kind too, but so fretful he makes me miserable."

"Take care, Elliott, that you do not make your mother miserable too, by this discontented

temper. Go and pray to God before you sleep, to give you a heart to feel and adore his goodness."

"Mother," said Elliot, "I never leave you while you speak to me in this cold sad voice." Nor was it long before Mrs. Lee was made to smile again; and when she bid her son good night for the third time, it was with earnest protestations on his part, that he would endeavour to look on the bright side of things, and to think that other people might mean as well, if they did not always act as wisely as his mother.

When the morning came, however, Mrs. Lee was a little puzzled how to reconcile her preconceived ideas of the proper occupation of the sabbath, with the manner in which it was spent by her friends. Almost all the members of the family dreaded, and some loathed, its strictness, its monotony, and its dull dead calm; and therefore all took advantage of the prolonged slumbers of Mr. Grey, to extend their

own to the latest period his discipline would allow. Then followed the struggle so fatal to domestic peace—the struggle against time, producing a scene of confusion, hurrying, and discord; with blame thrown here and there; harsh words bandied to and fro; and servants, and those who could not or dared not defend themselves, left smarting under a sense of suffering and wrong; in order that a decent procession might be seen in due time moving under the banners of religion to the house of God.

It was a sight half comic, half melancholy, to see the poor little Greys in their nursery, thrust from one impatient hand to another, screaming under their hasty ablutions, and smarting from the violence of their tumultuous toilet—some of the most daring mopping and mowing at their persecutors, and then in a moment, at the sound of an imperious bell, stealing silently down the stairs, and along the hall into their father's presence; where with

sleek hair, and features as inexpressive as those on their china cups, they sat like moving but insensible figures, so constructed as to perform the functions of humanity, without its enjoyments or its pains.

Stephen Grey, the father of this promising family, was a man who gravely and thoughtfully studied the laws of his country, its politics, and the religion of his forefathers; he had even obtained a smattering of philosophy under some of its most practical forms; but of the study of the human heart he had scarcely condescended so much as to think. He loved his children, because they were his own; he determined to make them good citizens, because it was decent and politic to be so; and good Christians, let us hope for a better reason. In business, his alacrity, promptness, and ability, were such as to render his influence extensive; while in his household, the will of the master was law. Whatever he chose to plan, or put in execution, passed without ques-

tion or comment, unless behind the scenes; for like Falstaff he refused to tell his reasons on compulsion, and was equally impervious to every other mode of attack. If in this respect however, he resembled the jolly knight, it must be acknowledged that the instance stood alone; for in mind, person, and general bearing, he might be concisely described as the direct opposite of that laughter-loving hero. His light blue eyes were seldom known to deviate from their impenetrable look of glassy coldness, and when they did, it was to be darkened by a frown, not animated by a gleam of light. Over his pale high forehead, divided across the middle by two rigid lines completely parallel, rested a few locks of thin fair hair, combed smoothly oftener than the day, and shorn of their exuberance whenever they were felt to wave in the wind, or resist the pressure of the composing hand.

A smile has destroyed the harmony of many a face, but with Stephen Grey it was not so.

On the very few occasions when this variation of his features appeared, his smile was noted as being so entirely free from all light, gross, and even sinister expression, as to correspond entirely with his upright, strong, unvarying character: just as a gleam of sunshine in passing over the rugged mountain, only serves to reveal more clearly its hardness, its sterility, and its strength.

It need scarcely be added, that the words of Stephen Grey were few; for never did any human being successfully aspire to be dignified and important, without practising, as if by a kind of instinct, the art of speaking little, and of so modifying that little, that the variation of the simplest tone or gesture, shall mark it with more emphasis, than the elaborate discourse of less weighty men. Indeed, there is some reason for suspecting, that in such tones and gestures consist the mystery of greatness; for, repeat what a man of this stamp has said, and it frequently amounts to nothing; but listen, and

observe the imperative movement of the head, the lips compressed as if the bursting forth of an unguarded or extraneous word would produce convulsions in the mighty frame; and, deep into your stricken soul will sink the various intonations of the voice uttering sounds whose meaning beggars that of words, from the shrill rebuke, through all the gradations which denote contempt, down to the low deep growl of disapprobation.

We often shrink away wounded and irritated from the presence of such a person, yet unable to say why; for if we would recall his words, merely as words, they tell for nothing; while as indications of the speaker's meaning, with all their inimitable accompaniments, they have told more, a thousand fold, then we wished either to know or feel.

Of this class of lancinating speakers was Stephen Grey; and yet he spared his neighbour when absent, and never dealt in idle gossip. His forte was to lash the sore, and he did it in

such a way as left no possibility of appeal. Too haughty for contest, he seldom brought forward a direct charge; but in common conversation he could leave his sting, and pass on, without noticing the wound, or explaining why it was inflicted. It is but charitable to suppose that more than half the pain he gave was unintentional, for he knew nothing of the peculiar feelings of those around him; and thus often punished where he meant to please, but seldom pleased where it was his wish to punish. He believed that all human beings were to be governed by the same *iron rule*, and that the errors of all might be corrected by the same chastisement. The principle upon which he maintained his authority was that of implicit obedience; but he overlooked the most important part of *moral* government, the necessity of making obedience a matter of choice, and not of *compulsion*. Had Stephen Grey permitted the good-will he really felt for his fellow creatures, sometimes to appear before the eyes of

men, more especially had he occasionally been known to sacrifice his own personal gratification for that of others, he might have won more affection from the warm young hearts around him; but it is not in human nature to love long or consistently, the being who never makes any sacrifice of self, or who never exhibits such natural signs of tenderness as create a bond of protection and dependence between the powerful and the weak.

Let who would be sick, or sorry, around the board or the hearth of Stephen Grey, his was the choice portion, and the warmest place. Not but that these privileges would have been willingly conceded to him as a right; but his manner was one that conveyed the idea of seizing rather than receiving; and it is wonderful the difference these two ideas produce in the feelings of the party whose place it is to resign.

Yet with all these alarming peculiarities, Stephen Grey was a good neighbour, a lover of

peace, an impartial judge, a powerful defender of the injured, and in short, a man who maintained both in his private and public life, a character of the most scrupulous integrity, and independence. Indeed this feeling of independence was carried to such an extreme in all his pecuniary affairs, that it became questionable whether money-making was not the primary object of his existence; not certainly, for the purpose of hoarding, for he was penurious in nothing but his domestic management. Here the same *rule* pervaded the kitchen, the parlour, and the school room, where industry—that is the industry of turning every effort and every talent into gold, was established as the cardinal virtue. "How much will it save," or "how much will it cost," was the universal interlude between every childish petition and its invariable denial; and as the expenses of clothing and education increased with his children's growth, he marked their necessities

with as many reproaches as if it had been unnatural to grow, or a crime to learn.

Nor were the religious observances of this family more tempered with the leaven of humanity. There was no pleasure, no congeniality, no meeting of the wants and wishes of our weak nature, in the religious discipline of Stephen Grey; but public justice for the erring, a sure sentence for the culprit, the strong arm for the rebellious, and the same uniform law of implicit obedience, from which there was no appeal, for all.

It may reasonably be asked, how such a man as we have here described, could ever stoop to solicit the love of woman—a question which on the plea of utter ignorance, the writer declines to answer; it having always appeared to her one of the greatest mysteries in life, how men whose very birthright seems to be the inalienable privilege of commanding, should humble themselves to the common language of love;

yet that they do actually *solicit*, and not command, we cannot for the honour of the female sex permit ourselves to doubt. And certain it is, that Stephen Grey did lead to the altar a fair and gentle bride, who found little difficulty in conforming to the very letter of her vow. It is true she was hardly prepared for *all* that followed; for being considered merely as a piece of domestic machinery, whose office was to keep the rest of the household furniture in order; she was not prepared to have *all* her womanish wishes thwarted as if for very pastime, or to bring up children whose infantine caresses should never meet a father's tenderness; and for some time she persisted in introducing them occasionally to his notice. When they looked their loveliest, and sometimes when her heart was lightest, she would suffer them to reach so far as the sober page upon which her husband's eye was fixed, while the merry urchins would laugh, and crow, and pat the rustling paper, until an angry growl,

or a sharp stroke upon the little rosy fingers, sent both mother and child into the nursery, to hide their disappointment, and their tears. Here it was that Mrs. Grey learned like many other weak women to seek the sympathy she was denied elsewhere; for with her servants she could converse about her children, and in the society of her humble friends she could freely enjoy their playful prattle.

Dangerous as this system of confidence was, it would have been well if the stern discipline of her husband had driven the helpless wife to no other resource; but there was one more lamentable means of escaping the harshness she dared not brook, to which poor Mrs. Grey at last descended, and that was to *deceive*. It was not her nature, and still less her wish, but she was harassed, frightened, and systematically denied every trifling request, merely because it was a woman's; and though she could have borne all this for herself, for her children she thought it not only justifiable,

but meritorious to find some way of escape. Hence followed the forbidden wish secretly indulged; the detected transgression covered with an evasion—perhaps with more; the unlawful treat when papa was gone from home; and all that fatal undermining of domestic comfort, of social union, and of moral rectitude, so sure to follow when the wide field of deception is once thrown open.

Mrs. Lee, a distant relative and early friend of Stephen Grey's, saw this and trembled; for it was too late to remedy the evil. The delicate constitution of Mrs. Grey was fast sinking under her accumulated cares, and her consort was too closely wedded to his favourite system to listen to the voice of a woman, *charmed she never so wisely.*

It was painfully distressing to remain inactive, and watch the web of evil strengthening around unwary feet; but two days of her visit were yet to be accomplished, and Mrs. Lee determined to take advantage of the first

opportunity they might afford, of speaking freely to her friends in the cause that lay heavy on her heart.

The sabbath was a day she had been accustomed to regard as peculiarly fitted for social communion on subjects embracing eternal as well as temporal interests, and therefore she hoped that another sun would not set without her mind being disburdened of that portion of anxiety which prompted her to the discharge of this duty, merely as such, however ineffectual it might prove.

CHAPTER II.

The sabbath morning rose, and Elliott bounded into his mother's apartment to announce the auspicious dawn of the day he had been taught to love so well.

"The sun is bright and clear, without a cloud," said he, "so that we may walk to church all round by the grass lanes—and the old women may put on their best cloaks without fear of rain—and the cattle may lie down in the warm sunshine—and the swallows may consult about their distant flight—and the autumn flowers may come forth and expand themselves, as if it were summer still. Oh, mother! we only want Catherine and Her-

bert to make us quite happy on such a day as this!"

"You forget, my child," said Mrs. Lee, with a slight faltering of her voice, "that Catherine and Herbert are not *all* we want to make us quite happy."

"No, no," replied the boy, "I do not forget that my father is on the deep sea; but you sometimes look so sad and serious when his name is mentioned, that I never like to be the first to say how much we want him home."

"I am sad, Elliott, because it is a hard thing to look round us, in the places and the seasons when we should otherwise be happiest, and miss the face we love best; and I am serious, because I feel it a great charge to bring up his family without his guiding and protecting care; because I fear you will not be, in all things, what he would wish to find you, after a long absence; and when I think how good and kind he is—how much

above all mean ambition to know, or do, or be what is inconsistent with the will of Heaven, I look serious, because I feel how responsible I am to that Heaven for the unspeakable privilege of having such an example for my children, and such a friend to direct and comfort me."

Elliott and his mother were ready for the religious duties of the day long before the rest of the family; and Mrs. Lee took that opportunity, before the mind of her son was distracted by the variety of excitements it was apt to receive through every hour, of reading to him from the Bible, or conversing with him on the subjects with which she sought to fill the first place in his thoughts; or, if he would not suffer them to do this, her hope was, that they might at least be so impressed upon his mind and associated with his pleasures, as ever afterwards to be recalled in conjunction with some of his happiest hours.

Yes, and let man enjoy what he will in

after life, if his childhood have been blessed with the care and kindness of a judicious mother, there will come moments when the cup of pleasure will be dashed from his lips as tasteless, in comparison with those hours of sweet and social intercourse, when he first learned to look for a pervading Spirit in the realms of nature—to welcome all the animated and joyous creatures of earth as members of his own wide brotherhood, and to hail the beams of morning as pledges of the inexhaustible beneficence, which created both life and light, and ordained them as blessings to mankind.

Mrs. Lee was accustomed to spend as much as she possibly could of the sabbath in the society of her children, blending enjoyment with instruction, and affection with serious thought; contemplating the wonders of creation as well as the truths of revelation; leading the unsophisticated and curious mind to a full and unreserved development,

not only of its natural faculties, but of the crude notions formed upon its limited experience; encouraging the timid in their hesitating obedience to the claims of duty; by adapting herself to the feelings and tempers of those around her, drawing them on to a fuller examination and confession of their motives of action, as well as their general views of the great principles of Christian life and conduct; and, finally, pouring into the softened and conciliated soul a foretaste of that blessed peace, whose fruition is the reward of the faithful.

It was on these days that the errors of the past week used to be confessed, examined, and pointed out as warnings for the next; that the speculative inquirer used to find a full and patient hearing; and if there had been a little prodigal—a wanderer from the fold of peace or affection—it was on the sabbath that he returned, and, folding his arms around his parent's neck, determined, in his

innocent but reckless wilfulness, to sin no more.

Accustomed thus to regard and occupy the sabbath, Mrs. Lee thought it no sin to wander forth, even on this day, into the qûiet fields with her children—to pluck the wild flower, and discourse upon its nature and its growth—to listen to the happy birds, and participate in the gladness of their song—or to contemplate the blessings of repose and social fellowship, exhibited in the various groups thronging the doors of the village on the sabbath day.

More wearied than she liked to confess to herself with the monotony of her friend's family, Mrs. Lee stole away on the Sunday afternoon, for one of those quiet and confidential rambles always anticipated by her children with extreme delight. The fields were now cleared of their golden burden; the berries of the hawthorn and the wild rose mingled with the gorgeous hues of the fading foliage;

the clustering fruit, and sere leaves of the wandering bramble marked the decay of summer's glory; while the robin perched upon the half naked boughs of the ash, chaunted that wild sad dirge that appeals so touchingly to the sympathies of man. Still there was no sadness in the scene, for the mother and the child had that within their hearts, that makes a paradise in the midst of winter's snow; and on they wandered, discoursing amongst other things of the changes of the seasons, and their wonderful adaptation to the nature of man's mind, prone as it is to weary even of the sweet and the beautiful, unless occasionally deprived of that which constitutes its chief enjoyment.

Their thoughts were not, however, entirely occupied by the general contemplation of nature, or of that portion of it which owns no moral responsibility. On crossing the green of the neighbouring village, for the purpose of returning by a different path, the quick eye of Mrs. Lee was attracted by an aged couple

bending studiously over the volume in which they had been searching, long and diligently, for the text of the morning sermon. It was evident that their search was attended with considerable labour, their stock of book learning being barely sufficient to help them to the capital letters; and Mrs. Lee, accustomed to associate on terms of cordiality with her own neighbours of this class, found no difficulty in approaching the venerable cottagers, without drawing upon herself the charge, either of intrusion, or of idle curiosity. In a few minutes she found the text they wanted, and offered to read aloud the whole of the chapter, or anything else they might wish to hear. Her offer was gladly accepted, and the quiet couple listened to her in unbroken silence, and with looks of the most earnest attention to the end; when, encouraged by her open countenance, and friendly manners, they took the opportunity of asking various questions productive of a clear explanation of some passages of the

Bible which had hitherto defeated all their attempts at elucidation; nor was it until the cottage clock warned them of the lateness of the hour, that Elliott and his mother rose to depart, and to exchange this scene of simple peace, for one as silent it is true, but far less fertile in real enjoyment.

They found the family at Welbourne House assembled in one apartment, where the sonorous voice of Stephen Grey held forth in solemn tones and slow, from a book which scarcely one of the individuals present could by any effort of attention understand. These efforts however, to judge by the countenances of the audience, had not been very studiously made, for some had resigned themselves to sleep, others had kept their eyelids open by the amusement of pinchings and counter-pinchings beneath and behind each others' stools; and even Mary,—the patient, uncomplaining Mary, stretched out her neck every time a page was turned over, in the hope of

seeing the welcome blank that would mark the termination of one sermon out of the many preached in vain.

And there upon their stools the poor little sufferers had been seated for hours, first to be catechised, then to be lectured, and afterwards to be read to, without one single word, or look, or tone, calculated to reach the well-spring of an infant's feelings, or foster the first fruits of an opening mind.

As it is hoped the reader will take some interest, if not exactly in the system of domestic management adopted by Stephen Grey, at least in observing how that system worked, it may not be out of place here to introduce to his notice the different individuals upon whom it operated.

First in importance, then, was James Grey, the oldest son, whose complexion, hair, and features, bore a strong resemblance to those of his father; but that greater pliability of muscle enabled him to smile, as well as look

serious, just as occasion required. Some people thought it a sinister smile, and certainly it was one that seldom ripened into a hearty laugh. It seemed to be a smile, having a purpose in it, rather than arising from the natural gaiety of a light free spirit.

With all his strict sense of propriety, his inborn desire to be, to do, and especially to look, the thing most approved in society, James Grey was not able throughout the whole of his father's sabbath readings to shake off the influence of the leaden god; but the efforts he made to recover himself before detection, after each inadvertent nod—to rear himself up yet more majestically on his stool, though they sometimes endangered his person by a backward inclination, were truly worthy of imitation by his juniors, and such as they ought to have been proud to see an example of in their elder brother.

But wholly regardless of other people's merits, as well as unambitious to support his

own, George Grey, the next in age, sat reeling to and fro, now this way, and then that; his heavy eyelids raised only for the critical moment when most in danger of losing his equilibrium, or when his brother James in the intervals of his own slumbers twitched his jacket, jerked his elbow, or forcibly stuck a large pin into his round massy shoulders. Then it was that George endeavoured to maintain his often disputed title to sensibility; for touch but his person, and he was all alive—touch it with ever so minute a sense of pain, and if so situated that he dared not kick or bellow, the big tears used to stand in his large grey eyes, while his thick lips protruded in the silent petulance of a sullen, slow, deep-seated rage.

As if in contrast with the gross bodily substance of George Grey, his sister Mary had seated herself beside him; her earnest thoughtful eyes, that looked too spiritual for sleep, fixed intently upon her father's countenance,

her slender figure bending from the weariness necessarily accompanying her long and patient endurance of this unnatural restraint, and her attention, whenever it wandered from the subject of her father's book, (which it did perforce,) resting with love and care and tenderness upon the different objects around her.

Mary was not beautiful, nor a genius, but she had something in her pale and serious face which often fixed the eye of the beholder, making the sick or the suffering appeal to her for sympathy, and the helpless ask at her hands the kindness of which they were in need.

Next in the group was Allan Grey, in countenance like Mary, but possessing far higher claims to beauty. There was evidently more of genius in his character; while he wanted the strength of mind, the firmness, and stability of his sister. He was one of those fair and delicately moulded creatures, who make us tremble for their after lot; and even while the sun is upon their shining hair, and the

light of early life beams from their "pure clear eyes," we involuntarily mark out for them a path of sorrow and suffering, which we would almost rather occupy ourselves than see them doomed to tread. Yet why these gloomy comments upon Allan Grey, who looked up with rosy cheek and dimpling smiles, as soon as the sharp rebuke was ended, or the tear was wiped away?

Mary had usually found it necessary to separate Allan from the little mischievous, rebellious Harriet, but, on the present occasion, they sat together; and, whatever might have been Allan's wish, it was impossible to yield to any kind of composing influence, so long as Harriet, with her curly head and laughing eyes, sat mimicking, in dumb show, all the animals that "went up into the ark," or alternately stretching her arm to its utmost length, in order to accomplish a sly prick at George, or twitching Allan's waving curls, and then, in an instant, looking gravely up

at her father, as if drinking in the wisdom of Solomon.

There was no genius in Harriet's countenance, and little beauty besides that of extreme vivacity. Her features, when in motion, (and that was almost always) indicated the most inveterate love of fun; but when at rest, they were marked by a strong will, the cause of many a desperate struggle in the nursery, and of the infliction of corporeal punishment, so frequent as to harden the feelings it was unable to subdue.

Ellen, the youngest child, more commonly called by the undiscriminating title of "baby," not yet old enough to be admitted on these solemn occasions, remained in the nursery with her too-indulgent mother, whose rapidly increasing weakness rendered her less capable than ever of exercising the authority of a parent.

In the midst of the group we have here described, Elliott Lee made his unceremonious entrance. Accustomed to no restraint but that

of reason, love, and duty, his manners were easy, natural, and free; and while he glanced round upon the little automatons, who bore without complaint their different lot, his curling lip too plainly indicated the scorn his mother so often attempted to restrain: for, to say the whole truth of Elliott, he was too proud and too bold in the expression of his contempt, to be at all times an amiable and agreeable companion. Mary Grey would plead with her brothers that Elliott had a right to be proud, he was so handsome, so noble-hearted, so clever; and if they would not listen, she would add what to her was of far less importance, he was born to the inheritance of an independent fortune. To this happy fate the boys were by no means indifferent; but, at the same time that his circumstances entitled him to their respect, it was evident that respect was tainted with a slight touch of envy. Nor was it more than reasonable that, to associate with one so pri-

vileged, should call forth feelings, the reverse of amiable, in the minds of those whose portion in life seemed likely to be essentially different from his.

" Cousin Lee," said Stephen Grey, as soon as the children had retired on the Sunday evening, (for such was his quaint but familiar mode of address,) " I cannot part with a friend so long known, and, I may add, so much esteemed, without expressing my regret, in relation to the observations I have made upon your system of education, particularly as refers to religious observances."

" You have so exactly described what was the burden of my own thoughts towards you," replied Mrs. Lee, " that if we do but go on with the same unanimity, we shall part with mutual satisfaction."

" What!" said Stephen Grey, his brow contracting as he spoke, " do you mean to insinuate that there is any thing to be said against the system of management adopted by me in my family?"

"I mean not to insinuate, Mr. Grey, but to tell you plainly, that I think that system at variance both with reason and experience; and, if persisted in, there is but too much cause to fear it will be ruinous in its results."

Stephen Grey had never been the subject of so great an insult before; and, losing his self-possession so far as to overstep the bounds of common civility, he replied to the unflinching offender in no measured tone:

"Look to your own ruin, Mrs. Lee, and remember my words when that haughty rebel of yours has broken his mother's heart."

"This is the sabbath evening," said Mrs. Lee, gently laying her hand upon his arm; "and we are two parents, met to converse beneath the eye of Heaven, upon the temporal and eternal happiness of our children."

"Say on," said Stephen Grey, subdued by the mild dignity of her manner, as well as by the mortifying conviction of having been betrayed into the sin of anger at a time when

passion was least excusable. "Say on; I hold it the duty of a rational man to keep his mind open to conviction, but remember the end is not yet."

"True, my friend; and while the end is hid from us, it is our part to look carefully to the means. I will not repeat now the many arguments I have held with you on this subject. You know the principle upon which I act is one calculated to make obedience a matter of choice rather than of necessity; and my primary endeavour is to associate the first acts of submission and the first ideas of duty, with so much enjoyment, that they shall ever afterwards be recurred to with pleasure."

"And for this reason you roam about the fields on the sabbath day, and catch butterflies, and let your son run wild."

"The colouring you have given to a rational and quiet walk is ridiculous enough; but let me ask what you do, Mr. Grey?"

"I make my children feel the difference between the sabbath and other days, by marking it with a more sober, orderly, and decent demeanour; and I endeavour to occupy every moment of their time, either by religious exercises or by serious reading."

"I, too, should be sorry for my children to spend any part of the sabbath in positive idleness; and, in order that this may not be the case, I study how to vary their employments so as to adapt them to the infant mind; and I think you will hardly maintain that, after an hour's walk, a boy of ten years old will be less interested by suitable reading than if he had been listening, or trying to listen, all the day. Again, even serious reading may have its disadvantages if not selected with care, and for this reason I make a collection of books that appear suitable to me, and submit them to my children's choice."

"My children," replied Stephen Grey, with an air of superior authority, "are not per-

mitted to choose for themselves. I fix upon the book, and never find them unwilling to listen so long as it is my pleasure to read."

"Children," observed Mrs. Lee, "are often unwilling when they dare not appear so; but I fear, my friend, that this comparison of our different rules of action will tend to very little purpose while their effect upon the moral character remains to be proved. I would rather reason from the nature of the human heart, and from the established fact *that we are always inclined to do what gives us the greatest pleasure, rather than what we know to be intrinsically best;* and, consequently, when religious observances are rendered painful or irksome, from want of adaptation or variety, they will be neglected in after life, if for no other reason, because of the distressing recollections with which they are associated. The idea that religion is a kind of slavery, to which none can submit without sacrificing the natural enjoyments of life, has

ever been the greatest hindrance to its advancement amongst mankind. How much wiser and better should we be, if we could carry along with us, from infancy to old age, the full conviction that happiness—substantial fundamental happiness, is founded upon the continual cultivation and exercise of the Christian virtues."

"This sentimental philosophy of yours, may be all very fine in theory," said Stephen Grey, "but I am a practical man, cousin Lee; and I must say, I should be ashamed to acknowledge in my family so rebellious a member as that high-spirited boy of yours."

"You are very severe upon poor Elliott," said his mother, with a painful consciousness that he was indeed far from possessing the virtue of a Christian temper; "but while his affection for his parents, his home, and the domestic regulations upon which all the comforts of that home depend, are so strong as to lead him back after every defection from duty,

with full conviction of his error, sincere penitence, and better resolutions for the future, I cannot altogether despair of his being ultimately what I most desire."

"The signs are not very favourable, cousin Lee. I never yet knew an insolent boy who did not turn out a bad man. Your boy may be an exception, but I should fear his example with the other children."

"My other children, thank Heaven! have not the same temper to contend with. Believe me I see the faults of Elliott as clearly, and much more painfully than you can; and even if in after life he should deviate widely from the line of moral rectitude, I shall not blame the system of education his father and I have thought it right to pursue; but watch, and pray, and even hope, for the time to come, when he may be led back by early remembrances to the path of virtue, which we are endeavouring to recommend to his choice by rendering it as happy as we can. Your

children are obedient, Mr. Grey, whether from choice or necessity—from love or fear, is not for me to say; but as one who has deeply felt the awful responsibility of a parent, I entreat you to study more than you have done their different dispositions and temperaments, in order that you may adapt your discipline to their various modes of thinking and feeling. Mankind are not like grains of wheat, all to be ground down by the same pressure. Some minds will be hardened by the force which others yield to, and some spirits will be broken by what is only a wholesome corrective to others. But I see my remarks are not acceptable. You think I am a visionary, as blind—perhaps more so—to the real good of my children, as I think you to that of yours."

Mrs. Lee rose as she said this, and it was with a countenance so sad and serious, that Stephen Grey repented him of the stern reproachful language he had used.

"Before we part," said Mrs. Lee, "let me

beg of you to pardon my interference, and believe it was well meant."

"I also must beg of you to pardon my rudeness," said Stephen Grey, "and to believe it arose only from a momentary surprise at hearing the propriety of my domestic regulations called in question. It is a thing I am not accustomed to, cousin Lee."

A cordial good night followed this acknowledgment, which was much more than might have been expected from the gentleman, and certainly much more than he would have deigned to offer to any other woman than her whom he regarded as the friend of his youth, and who, though she rarely saw any single point of moral duty in the same light with him, maintained, by the irresistible influence of her good sense and good feeling, the liberty of speaking to him with more freedom than was dreamed of by any other individual.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was but another day of penance for Elliott to endure, and when that was accomplished, he found himself, much to his satisfaction, snugly seated beside his mother in a travelling carriage, the horses, like himself, impatient to be gone, and the little Greys waving their hands, and repeating their adieus, as they stood peeping over one another's shoulders upon the steps of the hall.

Elliott thought he had never heard their voices sound so sweet before; indeed, it was so pleasant to leave them, or rather their dull, monotonous home, and he felt so happy in the thought of soon beholding his own, that a

thrill of affection warmed his heart, and he wished the most agreeable of the party were going with him and his mother; especially Mary, who looked so sincerely sorry, that he stretched out his head, and asked her to go, assuring her there was room enough in the carriage.

"You should have thought of that a little earlier," said James, with a smile which Elliott did not like.

"I thought of it, my love," said Mrs. Lee, holding out her hand to Mary, "and have obtained your father's permission for you to pay us a long visit in the spring."

The tears which Mary had been about to shed for sorrow, now rushed to her eyes for joy. She could express nothing but thanks, as genuine as ever flowed from a grateful heart; for of all society, Mary best loved that of Mrs. Lee, while, for her daughter Catherine, she had already commenced a girlish friendship, probably owing its strength and

durability, in great measure, to her want of congeniality at home.

The glimmering sunshine of an autumn morning soon faded from the travellers' path, and light grey clouds which had been flitting across the sky seemed gradually to gather into one uniform mass of threatening gloom; while a hollow, fitful wind rushed wildly through the trees, and scattered the remnant of their foliage. Mrs. Lee looked anxiously from one window of the carriage, and Elliott from the other. It is probable their thoughts were occupied by the same subject, but they held little communion, until the day was far advanced, when, as the clouds grew darker, and the wind blew tempestuously, Elliott drew near to his mother, and pressed her hand in his. It was not fear that kept them silent, for they were rapidly and safely approaching their beloved home, but anxious thoughts of one, who at that appalling hour was tossed upon the stormy sea, and Elliott knew too well his

mother's feelings to risk the name of him who was the guide and comfort of her life.

"I think there is no moon now," was the first remark he ventured in allusion to the painful and absorbing subject; but when he found that his mother answered only by averting her face, and pressing his hand more closely, he relinquished the theme altogether, and leaning back in the carriage, determined, since it was in vain attempting to divert her thoughts, that he would not interrupt them.

The tidings of their anxiously-expected arrival gladdened every heart in Mrs. Lee's family. The domestics gathered round their mistress, solicitous to give substantial proof of their welcome, by individually performing some act of kindness or attention; and the two younger children, who were permitted to take an active part in the scene, though later than their usual hour of rest, made the house echo with their joyful acclamations.

In relation to subjects of the deepest in-

terest, we seldom ask of others what we can ascertain by our own observations; and Mrs. Lee went directly to the mantel-piece to examine the last arrival of letters. There was one from a tradesman, and one from an old friend; but no tidings of the return of the ship in which her husband was expected.

"Then he must be on the wide sea this stormy night," was her internal conviction, and her heart sunk within her; but suddenly recollecting how much she owed to the affection and solicitude of those around her, she roused herself so as to enter, with her usual interest, into all they had to relate of what had taken place during her absence, and to listen with affectionate cordiality to their warm expressions of delight at her return.

All the different duties of a mother and a mistress were faithfully performed, as if her mind had no absorbing care. The presents for her children; the sick neighbour, and the dying pauper, were all remembered; nor was

it until every member of the household had retired to rest, and she herself had sought her sleepless pillow, that she yielded up her thoughts to the torturing anxieties of a sailor's wife.

Captain Lee had, in his early youth, been a victim to the alternate extremes of indulgence and severity, both injudiciously applied; and the consequence was a wilful abandonment of his unhappy home, with the wild reckless wish—half enthusiasm and half revenge, so prevalent with wayward boys—finally terminating in his going to sea. In the first paroxysms of indignation his father made his will, left all he possessed so that no part of it could be appropriated by his rebellious child, and died before he had time to see the absurdity and injustice of what he had done.

Without friends, without comforts, and equally without hopes, except what arose out of his father's partial fits of kindness, all remembered and magnified by contrast with

his present desolate situation, the young adventurer was soon brought down from his towering height of independence; and many were the resolutions he made in the long night watches, that, as soon as the vessel should touch the shores of England, he would fly to his father, and meet the welcome which he never doubted was awaiting his return.

With this determination, he actually set off from the seaport-town where he landed, to travel on foot to his native place. His resources were little beyond those of the humblest pilgrim, but his heart was light, his limbs were agile, and expectation, unclouded by a ray of doubt, led him cheerfully along. Undisturbed by fear or anxiety, he made no inquiries by the way; but walking straight up to the door of what was once his father's mansion, he first tried his strength upon the bolt, and then knocked loudly for admittance. A female servant answered his thundering knock—she was a stranger, but that was nothing.

"My father—" said he, and as he spoke, the accents died upon his lips, for by a single glance into the hall he saw that all was new and strange. There were female habiliments, and children's toys, and things his father never could endure the sight of.

The woman with the quick perceptions of her sex, soon guessed his name, and told him, as gently as she could, to what habitation his father was removed.

For a long time the boy stood like a statue upon the steps. He would not enter, and he could not go away. It was, however, no place for him; and little children beginning to peep from their nursery at the poor sailor, he turned his back upon the well-known door, and set off once more, to go, he knew not where.

"The world was all before him,"—

he had no ties of affection, and few of kindred; but the thought of the independence which at his father's death ought to devolve upon him as

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an only child, supported his spirit, and with a sense of humiliation arising from his destitute situation and forlorn appearance, which came upon him for the first time after he had learned that his father was no more, he sought the residence of his maternal uncle, where, along with a cool welcome, he heard the bitter tidings that he was not only an orphan, but a beggar.

For one night, and one only, he resigned himself to the agony of despair; and often in after life he would recall that night as being longer than many years he had since spent. The morning found him collected, and resolved. His situation was too clearly understood to admit of indecision. He had nothing but his own industry and exertion to depend upon; and with youth, and health, and elasticity, both of mind and body, in his favour, he took leave of his relations, unmoved by their languid entreaties that he would prolong his stay, and once more tried his fortune upon that uncertain element to which he looked as to his only

friend. He had now no fear of danger, no thought of indulgence. Prompt, decided, and energetic, he worked his way through all the gradations of a successful seaman's life, to the post of comparative dignity he had maintained with rectitude and honour, ever since his union with Catherine Grey.

To say that with the noble bearing of a dauntless sailor, Captain Lee had acquired a degree of intellectual refinement not often associated with his peculiar line of life, might seem too much like the fanciful invention of a woman's pen; did not observation bear us out in asserting, that along with rational conclusions drawn from the actual experience of social life, and above all, along with correct views of moral responsibility, whether derived from instruction or from personal observation, there is frequently associated a degree of moral dignity so far removed from prejudice and vulgarity, as to wear the distinctive characteristics of intellectual refinement. If, therefore,

Captain Lee was careless of his mode of speech, he never uttered sentiments that would disgrace a philosopher, or raise a blush upon the cheek of a true gentlewoman.

One of his ruling topics of conversation, in the transient intervals of social intercourse enjoyed with his family, was the paramount importance of making his children a happy home; and he never parted from his wife without laying this injunction upon her heart.

"Never fear, Kate," he would say, "if like wild birds they should fly away from the parent wing, they will come back when the storm is upon them, and they think of the shelter of their mother's nest."

Thus, not only from the conviction of her own heart, but of him who shared its secret cares, Mrs. Lee had bound herself, as to a sacred duty, by that great principle which she believed to be the foundation of moral discipline, and never was this duty more influential than when the perils of her husband's situation

were brought most forcibly home to her aching heart.

Who shall describe the night watches of those who know that the ocean bears the treasure of their souls—who shrink within themselves, yet seem to find no shelter from the howling blast—who listen, and hope that the storm is abating, when it does but retreat to come again with redoubled fury, roaring and bellowing, till the wild wind, and the creaking branches, and the hissing rain, are mingled as it were into one universal shriek! And then the dark heaving waters seem to rise again, and all is swept away by the booming waves, or by the moaning blast, that groans and murmurs as it falls, lower and lower, into the abyss of destruction.

Perhaps no woman could be more alive to every variety of this torturing agony, than the wife and the mother we have described; but as the storm grew louder, and her heart fainted within her, and she buried her face in the

pillow to escape the terrific sounds, her fears such as none but woman's heart can feel, her thoughts whose increasing tenderness redouble their excruciating anguish, and her sighs and tears for which she knew there was no balm on earth, were soothed by the consolations of prayer, or lost in earnest and heart-rending supplications for mercy and protection.

The morning rose upon a scene of desolation. The storm still raged, and the scattered heaps of autumnal leaves, with broken boughs, and loose fragments of other frail and perishable things, were tossed and driven to and fro before the unsparing blast. It needed all the fortitude and self-possession of the mother, after such a night, to meet her children with her wonted cordial manner. Their fondest caresses brought little comfort to her bosom, and in their cheerful gambols she saw only the frolic of the lamb that sports in happy ignorance of the accumulated ills of life.

This day was like the last, and the evening

closed in, dark, sullen, and tempestuous. On the following morning, as the little party were seated round the breakfast table, a man was seen riding at full speed up the avenue. He brought a letter from a friend in London. The first words told all. The vessel long expected had been seen off the eastern coast on the evening of the storm. It became a total wreck and not a soul was saved.

Elliott watched his mother's countenance as she read. It grew pale as death. He could bear no longer to be excluded from her bosom counsels, and throwing his arms around her neck, he mingled his tears with hers.

We will not attempt to describe the scene that followed, or the after days, of which each seemed longer and heavier than the last; for the first shock of grief carries along with it a kind of mysterious support to the stricken soul, subdued only by the quiet certainty of its succeeding gloom.

The widowed mother bore her affliction as a

Christian ought. Her conduct was not distinguished by any remarkable extremes, either of anguish or fortitude; but quietly yielding to the blow, she prepared herself as well as she was able to profit by its severity, and to bless the hand from which it came. All the ordinary routine of her duties was gone through with patience and submission; even that of enduring the condolences of friends, who in lamenting her bereavement, unanimously and almost in the same language pointed to that consolation by which alone she was supported.

Nor would we underrate the tender mercies of those who are in haste to sympathise with the fatherless and the widow in their affliction; but there is a time, when the stroke is recent, and the wounded spirit of the mourner is drawn as it were within the veil of the sanctuary of grief, to participate deeply and fully in the mercies reserved for the wounded and the contrite; when the common language of consolation might well be spared, when pity

however genuine or sincere conveys no balm, and when the last hope of the miserable, because it has been laid hold of and clung to as the last, needs not to be pointed out by officious hands.

Still the feeling which prompts this ready condolence is a kind one, and deserves to be patiently borne with. In the present instance the sufferer added the virtue of gratitude to that of patience. The many expressions of sorrow flowing in upon the first tidings of her calamity, were faithfully read over by Mrs. Lee; and if they served no better purpose, they helped to draw away her thoughts, for a few brief moments, from too concentrated a tendency to one absorbing theme.

Amongst these letters was one, which, from its peculiar character, it may not be amiss to quote at full length. It commenced, by way of avoiding too great familiarity, with the quaint address adopted by Stephen Grey.

"Cousin Lee,

"It would neither have been my business nor my pleasure to address you at this time, save that weighty considerations of what is due from me as a long tried friend, and I may add a faithful adviser, prompt me to an act of painful but imperative duty. Others may sympathise with you. It is more in my way to serve you. And I know of no means by which I can effectually do this, than by offering to take your oldest boy under my especial care, as an inmate of my family, where he may learn both by example and precept to be more obedient than he is likely to prove to a widowed and indulgent mother. It is probable that you may not just at this time wish to part with him, otherwise the bearer of this is prepared to make arrangements with you for his immediate coming to Welbourne. In case the tenderness to which (allow me to say you are too liable)

should overcome your prudence at the present moment, I shall still expect to receive your willing assent to my proposal by to-morrow week at the latest. In the mean time, let me entreat you to consider how much the welfare of the lad is at stake, and not from any weak prejudice in favour of your peculiar notions of domestic discipline, to throw away this opportunity of support and assistance offered by

"Your faithful friend,

"Stephen Grey."

CHAPTER IV.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that the proposal for placing Elliott Lee beneath the guardianship of her early friend, was declined by his mother, with many thanks for the real kindness which prompted the well-meant but ill-judged offer; or that Stephen Grey, his conscience once delivered of this duty, internally congratulated himself upon an escape from additional trouble and anxiety; for to tell the truth, as time rolled on, he discovered indications of disobedience amongst his own quiet flock, that baffled all his sage calculations upon causes and effects.

James his oldest son, and the pride of his

father's heart, still continued, to all appearance, a living proof of the benefit of strict and indiscriminating discipline; and George, though obstinate and impervious to instruction, seldom deviated farther from the line of decorum than to fill his pockets with the choicest fruit, and snore aloud during his father's interminable sermons. Mary, too, was a good and dutiful child, except that she sometimes ventured too far when endeavouring to propitiate parental feeling, by pleading for her brothers and sisters. But Allan, an idle miscreant, was for ever wandering in the fields, gathering wild flowers, or listening to the birds, when he ought to have been attending to his brother James, who, after completing his own education at fifteen, was constituted, for economy's sake, preceptor to the family. Yet worse than all was Harriet, a rebel of the deepest dye, whom no punishment could subdue, and no discipline could tame. Boisterous fun was all she cared for; and without any particular

delicacy as to the means or manner of enjoyment, she held a laugh or a frolic cheaply purchased by the sacrifice of her own or another's peace. Vain were all the threats of her father, the frowns of her brother James, and the entreaties of Mary, to whom her mother's death had bequeathed a sort of maternal authority, extending, however, little beyond the helpless infant left to her sole care. Still if there was any human being for whom Harriet would have ceased to mimick her father, and teaze her brother George, and play tricks with Allan when he ought to have been gravely studying Euclid, or construing Virgil, it was Mary, whose disinterested solicitude for the good and the happiness of all around her, rendered it an object of anxiety with the generous hearted to render her happy in return.

Of this class we are afraid that Allan and his sister Mary must stand as the sole representatives in the family of Stephen Grey. And most probably it was the strength of the sym-

pathy, founded upon this feeling, which bound them together with more than common interest and affection. With all the others Mary was kind, and social, and ever ready to sacrifice her time and talents in their service; but to Allan she could unfold her inmost thoughts with the delightful confidence that they would not only be understood, but treated with consideration. In return she was to her brother the very prop of his life; for though gifted beyond his sister with a versatility of talent, and with that enthusiasm which, in connexion with talent, obtains the distinction of genius, he was miserably deficient in prudence and forethought, and more than commonly dependent upon female affection for all it suffers, and for all it yields.

Thus constituted, it was impossible but that Allan should be an object of contempt to his father, who was no more capable of understanding the heights and depths of such a character, than of analyzing the nature of a

comet, or describing its origin and its final extinction. He saw nothing in his luckless child but his want of common sense, of which his total disregard of all pecuniary advantages, was in his father's opinion, an unpardonable proof. Allan's capacity for profound thought, his susceptibility to all exquisite and extreme emotions, and his noble disdain of all affectation and concealment, went for nothing, or worse than nothing; for his reveries were mistaken for vacuity of mind, his susceptibility for childish weakness, and his open daring to seem what he really was, with the recklessness with which he permitted all his errors to stand forth undisguised, subjected him to a degree of harshness, and frequency of censure, far beyond that extended to his more prudent brothers. Like the rest of the family, however, he was silent and submissive in his father's presence; for no sooner was the stately step heard pacing through the hall, than the favourite book was hid; the last fragment of

the stolen sweetmeat bolted down the widest or the readiest throat, which mostly happened to be that of master George; and the pet kitten, spite of its teeth and claws, crammed into Harriet's pocket; while those who had been lounging on the hearth-rug, suddenly mounted, bolt upright on their proper chairs; and those who had been idle all the day, busily opened and shut the drawers and closets as if in search of some useful article or implement, without which it was impossible to proceed in their laudable exertions.

The whole scene being thus metamorphosed, Stephen Grey used to place his tall athletic figure in the midst of the group, never doubting but that he saw in the countenances and general deportment of his children, all that was to be known of their individual character. Business requiring his attention at the neighbouring town the greatest part of each day, his first questions relating to home affairs were uniformly addressed to his son James, as the head of the establishment, who, whether he

had taken the opportunity of visiting a friend, or with his fishing rod had spent the time from his father's departure till his return in the neighbouring meadows, used to answer with a tone as concise, as unembarrassed, and if possible as directly to the point, as if he had been all the while upon the scene of action.

Once or twice it happened that people had called in the way of business with a message for James, and he knew nothing of the matter; but then he could turn upon Mary with an angry reproof for not having sought him in the garden, the orchard, or the attic, where he was often obliged to retreat in order to pursue his studies without interruption. And Mary on such occasions never betrayed her brother, for fear of the tremendous wrath of her father, dreaded by all but herself and Allan, more than falsehood; but she used to fix upon the wily deceiver her clear searching eyes, under which he quailed almost as much as if he had met his father's frown.

It was much to be regretted that Stephen

Grey did not know the difference between returning in this manner to his own fireside, and that return which is met by a cordial welcome, and a full and fearless detail of all that has been done, and thought, and suffered in a parent's absence. For in his case it was more from real ignorance of what constitutes the secret of domestic union and happiness, than from the hardness of his own heart, that he was never met with the frank cordiality of affection, nor suffered to penetrate beyond the surface of the domestic scene. Had he known the whole, or even but a part of what his children were individually thinking and feeling, he would have been sorry to thwart their innocent wishes, and cut down the springs of early hope, and poison the fountains of filial affection, as he did. For from the days of their infancy they had seldom had a favourite game but it was thought objectionable and forbidden; seldom was a little hoard of money laid out in the purchase of a long-wished-for

treasure, but the treasure was condemned as worthless, or taken away as pernicious; in short, seldom did the little bounding heart betray its anticipations of promised joy, but the cup of pleasure was dashed to the ground, and the disappointed mourner chidden for a rebellious wish to recall its sweetness.

At the same time, however, there were games proposed in lieu of those forbidden, but they were generally such as had no charm, from being out of season, old, or spiritless; while useful implements of labour were recommended to be purchased instead of the appropriated treasure, and enjoyments were proposed and even forced upon the unwilling receiver, which from their own nature, or their want of right application, were converted into the severest punishments.

Nor was this all; the generalizing system of Stephen Grey often neutralized what might otherwise have been agreeable, by bestowing it upon the wrong person. For instance,

Allan, who seemed born to protect what was helpless, and to love what was capable of loving him, had found a beautiful spaniel struggling for its doomed life against the slippery banks of a river, to which it had been consigned as a supernumerary in the establishment of a neighbouring farmer. This dog he had carefully concealed from his father's eye; but it followed him in all his rural rambles, and whenever he sat down upon a bank to muse, or botanize, or collect the beauties of the wide landscape into an ideal picture, his little friend lying down beside him, would rest its head upon his knee, while looking up into his face, it seemed to thank him for the life he had rescued from destruction.

It happened one day, when Allan had wilfully stolen from his tasks to ramble in the fields, the afternoon being beautifully fine, and his poor dog howling for a walk, that his father returned some hours earlier than usual, and abruptly entering the school-room, found

all dutifully seated at their studies except the luckless Allan, whose vacant stool excited immediate remark and inquiry.

James, who had been piqued at the little deference shown to his authority, and who could sometimes tell the *whole* truth, when a part would have done as well, described in no measured terms the delinquency of his brother. In another moment Stephen Grey was rapidly pacing the path to which a gardener directed him, in pursuit of the truant; and just as Allan stooped to give the last lingering stroke to the silky sides of his favourite previous to their return home, his father, clad in the full terrors of magisterial authority, stood before him.

"Whose dog is that?" was the first question that passed his lips.

"Mine," said Allan, actually trembling, not for himself, but for his friend.

A few more questions followed, as to where and how the animal had been procured, and

then the party walked silently to the house, the dog all the while, (as such creatures will, when they are wished at the antipodes, so that they are not seen,) making himself as conspicuous as he could, by running before them in the path, barking, cocking his tail, and even jumping up to the powerful hand of Stephen Grey.

"The fellow is possessed," said Allan to himself; but they soon reached the stable-yard, where his father calling to one of the grooms, bade him tie a weight to the dog's neck, and cast him without delay into the deepest pond.

A fiery glow of passion, as burning and as deep as ever wrecked the human mind, rushed to the cheek and the brow of the indignant boy. He saw his favourite lick the hand of his destroyer, while the man in brutal tones bade him lie down and be hanged.

"If the dog must die, it shall be by my hand," said Allan, and darting forward, he

plunged a knife into its heart. A burst of childish tears gushed from his eyes as quickly as the life-blood followed from the wound, and seating himself upon the ground, he supported the head of the dying animal, nor ceased from his caresses till the last agony was past.

Stephen Grey and his groom were equally at a loss to account for this extraordinary scene. It is probable the father had some compunctious visitings about the means he had made use of to correct the extravagant propensities of his child, for he never again mentioned the affair of the dog; but twelve months afterwards, when his son James had given him peculiar satisfaction by his uniformly orderly and economical habits, as a reward for his exemplary conduct, he made him a present of an animal of the same species; while James, who had little partiality for any living thing except himself, looked as much at a loss how to be grateful, as a beggar, who in asking for bread, should receive a stone.

There is no wonder that with such indubitable proofs of his maladministration constantly occurring, Stephen Grey should be led at times to question the efficacy of his own rules; but unfortunately it was not in his nature to change them. We have already said that he knew nothing of the human heart in general, and having effectually removed himself from the confidence of his children, it was too late to learn the nature of theirs. Thus he was unable by any reasoning, or calculation, to account for the fact, that as they advanced in years, and might be supposed more capable of understanding what was due to him, not only as a master and a parent, but also as a man of personal dignity and power, they one and all showed symptoms of increased desire to transgress the wholesome laws prescribed by his wisdom, and enforced by his authority. Occasional outbreakings of juvenile waywardness he could have borne, because the prompt unsparing punishment he deemed it his duty to

inflict, served greatly to relieve his mind from the mortification of insulted dignity; but there was one long disputed point on which, to his lasting vexation and disappointment, his children gained a final and decided victory.

Not far from the country house, where, a short time before the death of his wife, Stephen Grey had settled his family for the benefit of pure air, and regular exercise, was a dilapidated and irregular mansion, said to have been part of an old abbey, and still bearing the name of the Abbey Grange, occupied by an Irish gentleman, and his son, a youth about the age of Mary Grey. Nobody knew either whence these people came, or how they lived; but Stephen Grey had shrewd suspicions, which he took no pains to conceal from his family, that having found it expedient to quit their country after the last revolution, they still held sentiments at variance with the established government; and that as to their means and mode of living, they were such as respectable

people who wished to stand well with the world, would be wise to countenance as little as might be, consistently with common civility.

These kind of insinuations, ambiguously thrown out, had the natural effect of making the old mansion and its few occupants, objects of peculiar interest, and insatiable curiosity to the young people. "Look! look! there are lights in the upper windows of the Abbey," —or "a carriage was seen this morning passing through the Abbey gates," were annunciations of such momentous importance, as to put an immediate stop to every other amusement; nor was it to be expected that Terence Malone, a wild hairbrained fellow, living within half a mile of this accumulating mass of curiosity, should be loath to exhibit his handsome person and bold open countenance, to the admiration of his wondering neighbours at the hall.

In vain did Stephen Grey insist upon that impertinent boy being discountenanced. He

seldom returned home without hearing the whoop and halloo of Terence as he whistled up his dogs, (a huge Newfoundland, and a little wiry cross-grained terrier) before they cleared the garden wall, and bounded across the fields to the Abbey. Nor was this all. The boy might be harmless in his frolic, and besides there was the advantage of numbers in the opposite scale to teach him better manners by virtue of their example—"but the father!" And here the rigid disciplinarian used to think with a shrug of actual horror, of the little agile figure he had once caught a glimpse of, with popery and rebellion in his very gait. What could he do—what would be left for him to do, if the father should make advances towards his acquaintance!

Nor was the thing he so greatly feared, slow in coming upon him. Mr. Malone did make advances, and he wore powder, and a pigtail, and was moreover a reputed violin player.

Some dispute had occurred between this

personage and the tax gatherer, and Mr. Grey being the general umpire on such occasions, the adventurous Irishman, who would have given up his title to a dukedom at a civil, or pitiful request, but who, like Hotspur, would not yield a hair when demanded as a right, actually intruded his unwelcome person within the domicile of Mr. Grey.

It was a few hours previous to the potent gentleman's return. The young people were as happy as laughter and liberty could make them, with Terence in the midst looking the very soul of merriment and fun. To him the appearance of his father was no interruption, whatever might be his amusement, for *business* he had none; but the rest of the party stood a little on punctilio, until the countenance of the stranger assured them that whatever might be the jest, or the game, he was ready to take a leading part in it, and to be as active and as merry as the youngest amongst them.

Delighted with the many antics he played

off to amuse the laughing Harriet, who from that hour became his favourite, the party were soon at ease; for if romping, dancing, singing comic songs, and exhibiting various tricks of sleight of hand, in which Mr. Malone was a great adept, will not break down the barrier of juvenile reserve, there is indeed little hope of the acquaintance ripening into intimacy.

James alone stood aloof, determined to take no part in the scene, that he might with a better grace describe it to his father, who, as ill luck would have it, rode up to the door without being heard, and entered his usually silent mansion, just as a peal of laughter, such as he thought could belong only to the orgies of a bacchanalian club, rang through the echoing hall, and stunned the ears usually so alert to detect his step.

Never was the stern countenance of Stephen Grey betrayed into so wide a deviation from its wonted stagnation, as when he opened the door of his own parlour on that eventful

day. It seemed as if the upper features of his face were taking leave of the lower, and that his spare and hollow cheeks, elongated by the separation, would never be compressed within their proper limits again. To recognize any distinct and separate object was impossible, for the twilight of a winter's evening, that hour so congenial both to merriment and gloom, obscured the distant walls of the apartment, while the red glimmer of a blazing fire made those who remained within the circle of its genial glow look more wild and fantastic than they really were; at the same time that its flickering and uncertain light revealed the disorderly state of the furniture, some articles of which lay topsy turvy in prostrate humiliation before their indignant proprietor. But what was worse to be endured than all, and what made the scene look most like an infernal dream, was the spectacle of the obnoxious little personage seated in the midst, with the poker in his hand, quavering it in the air, as an

accompaniment to the wildest passages of one of the national airs of the rebellion, as he sung, alternately with the desperation of a bravado, and the comic whimsicality of a merry andrew.

James and Mary Grey were the first to perceive the awful vision of their father standing in the open door-way; and while one advanced to prove his own personal distinction from the lawless mob, the other spread a lull over the party as quickly and as softly as if she had borne the magic wand of a fairy queen.

Mr. Malone no sooner perceived what had taken place, than, without any marks of concern or consciousness of doing wrong, he sprang from his seat, and advanced to meet the master of the house, with a manner so gentlemanly and independent, and apologies for the breach of privilege he had committed so easily expressed, that Stephen Grey was completely puzzled to decide how the whole affair ought to be treated. In fact, he was

never so quick-witted as to be ready for an unprecedented occasion; and if those with whom he associated, could but once drive him from his authoritative position, he was not more difficult to deal with, or more to be dreaded, than other men.

The first thing he did, in the present instance, was to order lights; for his perceptions being naturally strong, but extremely limited in their scope, he needed all the aid that could be derived from external circumstances, to enable him to ascertain precisely what was the nature of his enemy, or how far that enemy had advanced on debateable ground.

Obedient to the word of command, the young people, happy to escape from a dilemma, all ran to bring the lights, for once in their lives glad to fall in with the peculiar temper of their father, who after issuing the simplest order, for which one pair of hands were more than sufficient, never could be satisfied, so long as a single agent remained inactive. Had the

members of his family been numerous enough to merit the name of legion, he would have had them all run to fetch a candle, or a slipper, at the first mention of his wants,—a plain proof that he valued obedience before his own personal accommodation.

The present occasion was, perhaps, the first in his life, on which his choice would have been different; for such was the whispering of those who had run for lights, such the hurrying and agitation of the fearful, and such the tittering of those who cared for none of these things, that it seemed as if the two gentlemen would never be relieved from the obscurity in which they were mutually involved.

Stephen Grey stirred the fire,—his companion remarked upon the weather; he pulled the bell,—the Irishman had something to say about the tardiness of domestics; he walked to the window,—his enemy followed, and looked out upon the lawn as he did, though there was nothing to see; he took a seat by the table,—

in a moment, the undaunted intruder was seated opposite. At last the lights appeared, and were welcomed with a growl of impatience by Stephen Grey, who, after carefully snuffing the candles, looked full into the face of his visitor, with an expression which said, "Well, sir, what do you want with me?"

The business was soon explained, and in a manner so concise and shrewd, that the master of the house began to look upon his guest as quite a different sort of thing from what he had appeared by twilight. We will not insinuate that the secret of his metamorphosis lay in the fact of his having politely and respectfully appealed to the judgment of his neighbour, as to that of a person of sage counsel and experience, to whom the eyes of the people were raised. Far from us be the thought that a mind like that of Stephen Grey could be tainted with the vulgar weakness of vanity; but so it was, that when the young people one by one stole back into the room,

they found their father, in tones of the greatest composure and urbanity, conversing with the very man upon whom they had been taught to look with horror and contempt, nay, even with a faint suspicion of finding him encumbered with a cloven foot.

The first sight of Mr. Malone convinced them that he had one eye for their father, and one for them; for between the grave looks which appealed to Mr. Grey as his acknowledged superior, a bright twinkling glance directed to the children, seemed to say, "Leave me alone to manage the old gentleman, and when once established as a friend and neighbour, we will have many a romp, and many a merry game."

Before the serious subject of taxation had been sufficiently discussed, tea was announced, for the family at the hall adhered to the old fashioned custom of early meals, and though Terence and his father had not yet dined, they cheerfully acceded to a formal proposition

from their host, for their joining him at the tea table; where, despite the solemnizing influence of the master of the ceremonies, a few jokes passed between the father and the son, whose Irish blood was not to be tamed down by looks however stately and imposing; while those whose future hopes were involved in the event, peeped about to see how these preludes to a new and strange acquaintance were received.

When the table was again cleared, and the juvenile members of the household were seated quietly at their books, with every appearance of decorum, except that a suppressed titter sometimes escaped from the corner of the room to which Terence and Harriet had retired, the two gentlemen went on with the business of the evening; until, all being settled, and the state of the country, both atmospheric and political, (though of the last little could be said with safety,) duly glanced over, Mr. Malone rose with great gravity from his chair,

and advancing to the middle of the room was about to make a most respectful and humble obeisance to the master of the house, when a peal of laughter no longer to be restrained, burst from the juvenile party.

Stephen Grey was no less astonished than enraged, that such ebullitions of folly should derange the peace and decorum of his fire-side; but no sooner had his eye discerned the real cause, than wonder gave place to indignation, for there stood his guest before all his family, struggling, though at the disadvantage of having his enemy in the rear, with a furious and frightened kitten, which Terence and Harriet had contrived to attach to his cue, and which, while he was seated, remained quiet enough,

"unconscious of its tether."

It was a most inappropriate conclusion to an auspicious evening; for the bulwarks Mr. Malone had been at the pains to raise around

his own gravity, all gave way, and, laughing as heartily as the rest, he offered his hand to his host with the ridiculous appendage still dangling behind his person, and then swinging it to and fro, retreated with rapid strides through the hall, until Harriet scampered after him as he had anticipated, to receive her favourite, accompanied with a good night, and a hearty kiss.

CHAPTER V.

"I WILL never forgive you," said the good-natured Irishman, the next time he met Harriet in their rambles, "I will never forgive you for making me ridiculous before your father. I had acted my part to admiration, and you let me down before I left the stage."

This allusion to the stage brought on a dissertation upon private theatricals, which Terence followed up with a glowing description of some evenings he had enjoyed the last time he was in Dublin with his father, when he had taken a prominent part in a delightful little drama, got up for the occasion by a friend of

theirs. "And then, had you seen Cathleen," he exclaimed, for his thoughts were always turning to his sister, "Cathleen was a queen, and with my mother's diamonds on her brow, she looked as if born to rule the world."

"Nonsense, you foolish fellow," said his father, evidently not displeased to hear such encomiums upon his daughter, though aware how inapplicable they were to her peculiar style of beauty; "Cathleen looks more like a vestal, than a queen, and, poor child," he added, in a low and altered tone, "she is more likely to be one too."

It was the first time their new friend had exhibited the slightest sign of deep feeling, and Mary and Allan exchanged glances, which expressively acknowledged him to be a kind father, with all his levity. From this hour they loved him better; and as he almost invariably spoke of his daughter with a serious tenderness that redeemed his character in their kindly-judging hearts, Cathleen became with

them, as well as with her doating father and fond brother, an object of peculiar interest.

"But when will she come and live amongst us?" was the question with which Allan impatiently interrupted the praises of the ideal heroine; when the old man used to smile and shake his head, and ask whether he thought the den of two bears like him and Terence was a fit home for a delicate young lady.

An acquaintance commenced between those who were so much in want of society as the Greys, and their neighbours, was not likely to fall away for want of mutual efforts to improve and strengthen it. Harriet would have been the first to enter the interdicted precincts of of the Abbey, but that Allan, not exactly liking the forwardness of her proceeding there alone, offered to be her escort, nor could Mary's gentle entreaties prevail with them to give up this pleasure.

"Why should I not visit the old gentleman who is so kind to me?" said one.

"Why should I not associate with Terence in his own home, as well as in ours?" said the other. And, accordingly, with a very trivial errand, they made their first call upon their neighbours.

What might be the impressions made upon Harriet's mind by the interior of the building, whose ivied walls the young people had so often admired in their rambles, it would be difficult to say, for she took few away with her besides those of a rent frock, a bonnet rifled of its strings, and the confused remembrance of an hour of enjoyment. But her brother's was a totally different temperament, and time had never yet unfolded to him a scene of deeper interest than the venerable edifice, within which he now stood for the first moment in his life. The half-antique, half-modern aspect of every thing around him, bewildered his imagination by presenting the past and the present at one view. He had read of the severe and secluded habits of those who in former times retired to such mysterious sanc-

tuaries to shut out the world, and forget themselves to stone; but here he beheld the very walls that had witnessed their secret penance, and trod upon the same marble floor where the prostrate devotee had fallen in utter self-abasement. Few as were the vestiges now remaining to mark the former character of the building, Allan had an eye to perceive and magnify them all; and while Terence led him along the cold damp passage terminating in a dubious looking sitting-room, he would fain have lingered behind to spy out every arch, and pillar, or mutilated countenance grinning out from the mouldering stone, as if to prove that mockery too can endure the lapse of time, as well as strength, solemnity, and gloom.

The apartment usually occupied by Terence and his father was properly a library, the whole of one side of the room being appropriated to the accommodation of an extensive and heterogeneous assortment of books. In strict

propriety we ought scarcely to speak of them as *accommodated*, unless being placed in positions as various as their titles be most conducive to the repose of talent in its literary form. A cursory inspection of the apartment, more especially of the library, was sufficient to convince the beholder that Mr. Malone was not a man of exclusive tastes. On one dusty shelf stood Blackstone, bearing on his shoulders Arabian Nights Entertainments. From another the national music of the Green Isle seemed ready to precipitate itself in successive avalanches to the floor; and a little higher up the Whole Duty of Man reclined obliquely between the works of Jean Jaques Rousseau, and Lawrence Sterne. A carpet from whose dusky texture the colours of the rose and the lily were totally obliterated, a hearth rug on which two dogs were sleeping, a mantel piece bruised and broken as if it had stood the battery of a feudal siege, a table loaded with magazines and newspapers, a dozen chairs of diverse form and

size, a closet with the door wide open, prints from the first masters in dingy coloured frames, fishing tackle, guns, straps, baskets, and a guitar with broken strings, constituted the sum total of the furniture of the sitting room at the Abbey Grange; which, devoid as it was both of elegance and neatness, presented a perfect picture of that which all boys, and some men, prefer to every other kind of luxury—*a room to do what one likes in.*

"You see," said Terence, ushering in his friend, "we are not very neat, or very stylish here, but amongst my father's books, Allan, you will find a feast;" and he took down volume after volume, each one of which appeared to his delighted guest to contain a mine of never ending happiness. His attention riveted, and his imagination fired with the prospect of the enjoyment awaiting him, Allan could think of nothing but the books; and to all the hints thrown out by Terence, that they would be there on his return from the garden, that they

would do just as well another time, and that there were many other things he had not yet seen, Allan answered only by opening another, and another, until at last his ear caught the delightful assurance—"My father will lend you anything you like."

"Will he?" exclaimed Allan, his eyes sparkling with ecstacy, "I will take the greatest care of them."

"Oh! never mind about that," said Terence, "we are not very particular, as you may see. Here—we will send you a wheelbarrow full;" and so saying he emptied a basket of newly-gathered pears upon the floor, and in their place huddled together as many books, indiscriminately collected, as the basket would contain.

Allan was indeed a wealthy man when he returned home that morning, but the real benefit of his riches was no less questionable in his case, than in a thousand others, about which we mourn and moralize, and yet would

scarcely refuse to be ourselves the person whose safety is endangered.

With a mind constituted like Allan Grey's such reading as the Abbey library afforded, proved like fuel to a latent fire. Here were legends of the days of chivalry, chronicles of love and glory, and tales of the hero, and the broken hearted maiden; while every page glowed with the fiery transcript of those deep and burning passions, to which the human heart is liable at all times, and under every aspect of society. Upon this world of new thoughts, and new sensations, the enthusiast entered with insatiable appetite, regardless of the consequences, which became more fatal to his peace, from his inexperience, from the zest which secrecy gives to our stolen joys, and from the melancholy fact of his mind not having been previously fortified and strengthened by wholesome and natural food.

Buried in the pages of his favourite authors, Allan lost sight of all the world except his

sister Mary. With her he held too deep a sympathy to be willingly separated in his enjoyments; and choosing out of his hidden treasures the purest and those most suited to her taste, he submitted to her attention just so much of his literary amusements as served to increase the refinement and susceptibility of her feelings, without undermining their firmness or shaking their stability.

In the household of Stephen Grey the reading of all works of fiction was strictly forbidden. Novels were spoken of with a condemnation as unsparing as that levelled against highwaymen and banditti; and plays, though seldom named, when they were touched upon, were represented under a colouring of a still deeper dye. Nor had this rigid disciplinarian more toleration for the parents, who, selecting from such works the wisest and the best, sometimes allowed them to be read aloud in their families as a wholesome relaxation.

We will not occupy the time of the reader

by discussing the morality of this point. There are parents who would shudder at the idea of allowing such license in their families, and if their children can be so far excluded from the world as never to hear works of fiction named with interest, especially if they are wholly ignorant of the exercise of the faculty of imagination either for good or for evil, these restrictions may answer the desired end. But if such children have *once* had their imaginations set afloat by a song, a poem, a nursery tale, or even by the quiet musing of indolent and unoccupied hours, let their parents look well beneath the pillow, the desk, and sometimes the folded apron, for the stolen volume, whose pages are often the most pernicious which a circulating library, a secret friendship, or an intimacy with a treacherous domestic can afford.

Had Stephen Grey adopted the plan pursued by his cousin Lee, of reading to her family select passages from authors of the most dis-

tinguished merit, whether the truths they conveyed passed through the medium of fiction or fact, he would never have seen the light glancing at midnight below Allan's chamber door, and might thus have spared himself and his son the violence of tearing open all his locks, and the injustice of committing to the flames the property of another, which he had no right to destroy.

This circumstance, however, did actually transpire, with many aggravations of tone, manner, and expression, well calculated to instil hatred and rebellion into the unformed mind. But Allan, though hasty in his temper, and reckless of consequences to himself, had nothing malignant in his nature. The blow that would have hardened another boy into resistance and revenge, had the effect of deeply wounding him; and from his father's hand it fell so often, and with such unsparing violence, that he could not doubt the fact of his being the object of his peculiar disapproba-

tion and distrust. Naturally open and communicative as he was, so false a construction was often put upon his words and actions, and motives so repulsive to his feelings, attributed to him, that the energies of his mind were checked, his hopes depressed, and, had such a thing been possible, his affections would have been chilled. Instead of this, however, he seemed to be softened by his very sadness into still greater tenderness for the few objects he could, and dared love; and Mary, yearning over him like a bird over its wounded mate, longed to stretch out her feeble wings, and if she could not shelter him, to share the blow that was levelled at his peace. Nor was Terence backward in the hour of suffering or danger, to stand by his friend; for with all his love of freedom, his heedlessness, and his untiring quest of pleasure, the Irish youth possessed a heart that hurried him perpetually into the difficulties of those he loved, and in the present instance brought down upon him the supreme

contempt of the man, whom, for the sake of his friend, he would have done well to conciliate.

Mary was the only one in the family, except James, who possessed any influence with her father; and though that influence was supported by her own stability of conduct, and by an early gravity, the consequence of being prematurely subjected to the burden of domestic care, it was insufficient to defend her brother and her friend. For Allan, from his want of forethought, and from the strength of impulse under which he generally acted, was so luckless; and Terence was so determined, lawless, and devoid of fear, that her kind heart was perpetually tortured for them both, with that feminine anxiety that unfortunately enhances the affection to which it owes its pain, and its enduring constancy.

Like other faithful and disinterested performers of domestic duty, Mary, though constantly making sacrifices for the good of

others, found her sacrifices undervalued, because they did not extend to partial favours towards one, at the expense of another; or falsehood, where nothing less would conceal a fault. Her part was to care for all, and she did it at the cost of her own peace, excepting only that essential portion of it arising from a consciousness of acting for the best.

James Grey had little kindness in his nature, but he sometimes assumed an appearance of it towards his sister, to induce her to cloak the errors which even he, with his modulated tones and smooth countenance, had no hesitation to commit in secret.

George Grey, whose kindness centred in himself, would not pretend to more for anybody; but he could upbraid, and sometimes in his passion, lay violent hands upon Mary, because she refused to cover his thefts, his idleness, or his other delinquencies, with a lie. Harriet was passionate, wilful, heedless, and wholly intractable to Mary; and Ellen,

her peculiar charge, was yet too young to be any thing but a source of affectionate solicitude; but Allan was always gentle and considerate, and Terence was always kind. Yes, when ruder natures vented their spleen or their revenge upon Mary, Terence was ever ready with a blow for the offender; and then, folding his arms around her neck, he would kiss off the tears from her cheek, till he forced smiles and blushes to follow in their place.

It was when the intimacy between the two families had attained a greater height than Stephen Grey was at all aware of, that he suffered business so far to interfere with his wonted habits as to call him away from his post of watchfulness for the space of four or five days; or, as he hinted to his children in his parting charges, it might be for a week. In vain did he lay before their consideration the weight of responsibility that would devolve upon them when his guiding influence was withdrawn. Few of the faces

around him looked more serious than common, and none looked sorry, unless it were Mary's: for in her benevolent heart had grown up a sort of affection for her stern father, that could not let him depart from his own home, to risk the chances and inconveniences of a distant journey, without some touch of anxiety, and even grief. James, too, was seen to wear a demure and downcast look, that changed to the greatest extreme of satisfaction his countenance was capable of expressing, as soon as the stately form of his father had disappeared from his sight.

The apprehensions Mary could not help entertaining, that the liberty to which they were all left might be productive of consequences by no means agreeable to herself or safe to others, were not long in being fully realized. Applications were made to her for all sorts of forbidden things; keys were demanded which she had no power to retain; and a scene of general misrule and

disorder ensued, to which those families alone are liable whose obedience to a parent's wishes has been made an irksome duty.

Before the first tumult had subsided, Terence bounded into the room, and, as usual, quickly securing Mary from insult by the strength of his arm, and from reproach by the volubility of his tongue, good humour and something like good order were restored.

"I have come to propose something very pleasant to you," he exclaimed; "we have at least three days and nights of liberty to calculate upon—we will act a play! Nay, do not shake your heads—we will, we must! My father is altering two or three scenes from some old comedy, I forget what. We have a hoard of old fashioned dresses, out of which we may equip ourselves; and Mary, you know the long room in the west wing of the Abbey, it can be divided so as to make an excellent stage."

"But we never saw a play," said Allan, very much inclined to doubt his own abilities.

" Oh! my father," replied Terence, " will teach you all your parts; and we have a character exactly suited to Harriet, with her curling hair and laughing eyes. I had fixed upon it for you, Mary, but my father thinks it will suit Harriet better, and I am inclined to think it will myself."

" Oh! don't trouble yourself about me," said Mary, " I shall never act upon any stage."

" Mary means to *tell*," said George, sulkily.

" She means to do no such thing," said her faithful companion, accompanying his words with a smart box on the ear of the offender.

" No," replied Mary with perfect good humour, " I will do my part off the stage, and that shall be to help you all to dress; only I am afraid my father would not like it."

" He will never know," was the general exclamation; and it was one of too frequent use to call forth any serious compunction.

No practical device that fell short of sinful enormity, could have been at the same

time so objectionable to Stephen Grey, and so welcome to his children, as that which now set their young pulses beating with the anticipation of an enjoyment, as much beyond their own means of procuring, as it exceeded their warmest anticipations of delight.

All was now bustle and animation within the walls of the Abbey. Dark closets and secret depositories were ransacked, and long hidden things brought to light, in number and variety beyond both knowledge and calculation. It was amusement enough for one day, and might have lasted for many more, to ascertain to what possible uses the separate articles which composed this medley could be applied; but Mr. Malone, on the following morning, reminded his young friends, that as they had now but two safe days before them, it was necessary they should act more systematically, and apply themselves a little to business. He and his son, accustomed to entertainments of this kind, were

soon perfect in their parts; but, of the rest, some were diffident and some were awkward, and it required two entire days more to fit them for the scene of action.

Early subjection to unnatural restraint has almost invariably the effect of rendering children painfully embarrassed, under extraordinary circumstances; and under strange tuition, slow to learn.

With a more austere taskmaster, the Greys would have found their novel undertaking productive of infinitely more pain than pleasure; but Mr. Malone was so perfectly good humoured, entered so feelingly into the juvenile character, and was himself so undignified—so completely *one of the many*, that although at first a little abashed by his natural fluency and easy gesticulation, they were so entirely divested of fear, as finally to adapt themselves in all things to his tastes and wishes. It is true he was not very critical or difficult to please. Enjoyment was the end and aim of

his existence, and he had seen enough of the world and of human nature, to know that enjoyment is seldom of a social or expansive nature, when subjected to the censorship of strict and severe criticism.

The family of Stephen Grey had already spent some of their happiest hours at the Abbey; but this enjoyment shrunk into listless inanity when compared with the delicious excitement of the three days preceding the eventful evening of their play. They were then easy and contented, but now they had an aim in all they said and did—a common point of union—a sum of happiness before them which, by every one contributing his share, could be raised to what they considered as the highest pinnacle of felicity. In short, the enjoyment their warm-hearted friend had selected for them, by exercising their intellectual faculties in conjunction with their social feelings, seemed to raise them above themselves; and while Terence made the halls of

the Abbey ring with his vociferous eloquence, James, in conscious dignity, assumed the prince. Even George was warmed into the new emotions of a fictitious hero; Harriet tripped on the light fantastic toe, and Allan carefully closing the door of a large unoccupied chamber, repeated his private rehearsals with the genuine pathos of his susceptible, ardent, and imaginative character.

It was Harriet's part to personate a coquette, and although far too young to understand the complicated machinery necessary for the support of that mysterious fabric, so important in the constitution of artificial life, she could look mischievous, independent, and pert enough for a coquette of her own, or any other age.

Allan was a minstrel, and such were the delicious reveries called into existence by this new and interesting scene, that it proved the occasion of the first of those poetical effusions, which subsequently marked him for one of the luckless children of the Nine.

All the others had parts assigned them equally appropriate. The master of the ceremonies figured as Harriet's father. James was a prince, of course soliciting her hand; Terence was a bandit chief, and George the Marplot of their different schemes.

And now the eventful time drew near. A very successful rehearsal had been gone through, and Mary, at her wonted task, flew from one to another, arranging their dresses and their hair, darkening the ill-defined eyebrows, applying the all-important rouge, and hearing the different actors for the fiftieth time repeat the passages in which they felt least confident.

A stage had been erected at one end of a large but somewhat dilapidated apartment. The green curtain and every thing was complete, except the audience—a trifling deficiency they had all overlooked, and therefore the domestics were called in, and some of the most trustworthy invited from the hall. At last all were ready. With palpitating hearts they

heard the tinkling bell which called them to their different posts. The music of three village fiddlers struck up—the curtain rose! The lady appeared at the window of her bower, and the minstrel, bending on one knee, wandered with tremulous fingers over the chords of his guitar.

If there be one moment of delirious excitement surpassing all others, it is that in which a youthful poet essays to sing, before a partial audience, his own words.

Allan paused—perhaps he was startled at the echo of his voice. In another moment, he dropped the instrument from his outstretched hands, and stood erect, his eyes glaring wildly as if some ghastly spectre invisible to others had appeared to him. The measured and now rapid tread of a well-known step had reached his ear as it passed along the stone passages of the abbey, and full before him, clad in all the terrors of insulted majesty, stood the appalling form of Stephen Grey!

CHAPTER VI.

It was not often that Stephen Grey had recourse to the strong arm to enforce obedience, or execute vengeance; but, on the present occasion, his anger having being heightened by arriving, after a tedious journey, at a deserted home, and learning from the few domestics who remained, that his family were acting a play at the Abbey, we are sorry to have to record that personal violence was not entirely withheld; for there stood his son Allan, the object of his continual displeasure, so confounded with a sense of his own delinquency, so temptingly helpless, and so unresisting in his degradation, that the

indignant father strode upon the stage where his poor boy stood motionless, as if rooted to the spot by some mysterious spell, and seizing the loose drapery which hung about his shoulders, would have hurled him at once amongst the astonished audience, but that, fortunately for him, his minstrel's cloak gave way, and remained as a trophy of victory in his father's hand.

In the mean time, Harriet had communicated the unwelcome tidings to her friends behind the scenes; and James, with a prudent care over his own safety, which seldom forsook him, had taken the precaution to doff his borrowed plumes, and hasten home, where he might be ready to receive his father in his own proper person. But he was the only one of the party who had the presence of mind to think of their appearance. The rest ran hither and thither, directing hurried and stolen glances towards the scene of terror, but not daring to face the enemy, until Mr.

Malone, cheerfully stepping forward, offered himself as their champion.

"Come, come," said he, "my honest comrades, spare your fears for real danger, and your sorrow for your sins. If you never do worse in your lives than act a private play, you will have little need to blush before any man. Come with me and face your father, and never look in this way until you have wronged your neighbour, or told a lie."

Encouraged by these words, the terrified party advanced, Harriet clinging to the hand of her protector, and Mary grasping firmly that of Terence; while George skulked after them, his dejected countenance shaded by a monstrous slouched hat, that gave rather a ludicrous effect to his clumsy features.

Mr. Malone had scarcely a clearer conception of the real character of his neighbour, than his neighbour had of his. That a parent's anger at a harmless frolic, such as he regarded the play, should be wholly unappeas-

able, was a thing beyond his calculation; or, if that anger were unreasonably violent for one moment, he had no doubt but it would exhaust itself in the next. He therefore advanced boldly, with the full confidence that it needed only the sight of his children with their sorrowful countenances, to call forth all the tenderness of the father in the heart of Stephen Grey.

On entering the apartment appropriated to the festivities of the evening, they found that a general calm had succeeded to the first ebullitions of rage, which the terrors of Harriet had somewhat exaggerated in recital. The sound of the viol was no more, the audience had glided away one after another, and in the centre of the room stood Allan, trembling under his frills and feathers, while his father paced to and fro wondering what simpleton would next appear.

Mr. Malone advanced, with the dramatis personæ around him.

"Sir," he began in a mild and conciliating tone, but Stephen Grey, who had first stood still, and then, after looking him full in the face, as if to strike him dumb, had glanced scornfully at his embroidered dress, impatiently interrupting him, said with a sneer, "Mr. Malone, this is the first time I have entered your house, and I trust it will be the last."

The wild dark eyes of Terence flashed fire as he turned upon his father an appealing look, that seemed to say, "Let us defend ourselves from insult, at least."

But the temper of the elder Malone was cast in a different mould. Incapable of any deep or lasting passion, he saw no reason why the various mal-occurrences of life should not be passed over with a smile, and he answered to his neighbour's most uncourteous remark, "Two things are necessary, Mr. Grey, to render any visit agreeable—the kindness of the host, and the civility of the guest. One of these requisites I am sorry to find wanting

on the present occasion, but I should be still more sorry were the other not at my own command. You are but just returned from your journey. Will you sit down with us to a cup of coffee below, and we will talk over this innocent frolic, and make you see that no harm has been done, or intended?"

Stephen Grey looked rudely at him while he was speaking, and then replied hastily, "Have you no puppets to sit down with you and your son, that you must beguile my children from their duty?"

"Father!" said Terence, but his father laid his finger on his lip, and Stephen Grey went on—

"Mr. Malone, I used to think hardly of the laws by which my country vainly attempted to govern yours. I now see that private misrule as well as public rebellion, need to be discountenanced by all honest men, and good citizens."

"Turn him out, father!" interrupted Terence again, and this time not a finger only, but a

whole hand was laid upon his mouth, while even over the brow of his father there passed a momentary cloud; but suddenly recollecting the extreme absurdity of this pompous declamation in such a cause, he replied with a smile,

"Then good night, Mr. Grey. A countenance that carries gloom along with it wherever it goes, is cheerfully dispensed with. Good night, too, my dear children," and he held out his hand to them in succession as they passed. "Remember the Irishman's heart and home are both open to countenances such as yours."

Terence, divided betwixt sorrow and rage, accompanied the procession to the door as they moved on, silent as a flock of sheep, not daring to look back to their father who followed closely in the rear as if more effectually to cut off all communication with the enemy's out posts.

"Good night," said Terence kindly to his friends—"good night, sir," he added in a more

surly tone, as he glared upon Stephen Grey with eyes that did every thing but flash actual fire ; and then as the last sober foot descended from the steps, he swung the door to, with a thundering clash that echoed through the long dark passages of the Abbey, and made the startled owls come forth from the shelter of their ivied home.

There are few cases in which we are so much puzzled to understand each other, as in the nature and depth of our early impressions. None but the fireside circle who have occupied the same place in infancy, can recall the terrors of the iron grasp of one particular hand, or the music of the voice that charmed the rebel back after every transgression, and rewarded him with tenfold tenderness. Thus there are judicious parents having little to recommend them to a superficial acquaintance, who are tenderly, faithfully, and devotedly beloved by their children; and there are others whose innate coldness, and private

severity, escape the eye of the world, who are feared and shunned as the most cruel tyrants by the very beings it should have been their pleasure and their duty to cherish, but whose natural affections having been chilled and blighted in infancy, it is not in the power of parental authority to call forth again.

Terence Malone had lived on such familiar terms with his father, that his feelings towards him resembled those of a younger brother, rather than a son; and he was wholly at a loss to conceive the state of utter subjection, and unnatural fear to which he saw the Greys reduced. He was not philosopher enough to know that *system* is every thing in the management of communities both large and small; and that the chains of habit are infinitely stronger than any which can be imposed by direct or personal force.

"Mr. Grey is a stern man," he remarked, "but he will not—cannot, commit any bodily violence upon his children. The laws protect

them from that, and in these happy times we have no inquisition to fear. If I were Allan I would show him how little I cared for his majesty, and return the gripe of that cold bony hand of his, with a gentle kick."

"You know very little about what you would do, my good fellow," said Mr. Malone. "In your own person I have very little doubt of your being equal to the gentlemanly conduct you have described; but remember these poor children have been under the same dominion since they first began to think, and it would be just as easy for them, with their impressions and their associations, to break through the unnatural restraint under which they suffer, as for you with yours, to tremble at the sound of your father's step."

Terence laughed aloud at the novel idea, and Mr. Malone went on. "It is not always the convent vow that keeps the recluse within his cell. There are daring spirits who would easily sever a single bond, but the customs to

which we become inured, weave a thousand cords around us, that grow into the vital part of our nature, and only strengthen with the lapse of time. It is possible these luckless children may some time or other venture to burst from their father's control, but they will bear along with them, wherever they may go, in whatever circumstances they may be placed, a lamentable want of that bold enthusiasm, and undaunted energy which mark the man of generous feelings and liberal education."

"I think there is a good deal in what you say," replied Terence, "for Allan, highly talented as he is, seems always afraid of being clever, and still more so of being eloquent. He never finds himself speaking with warmth and fluency, but he begins to blush and hesitate, as if he were telling a lie; and though he draws beautifully, he is as much ashamed of his sketches being seen, as if he were a little school-boy called up to show a sum he could not prove. Still there is Mary, so

excellent a creature, that one can scarcely blame the education which has made her what she is."

"Mary is indeed unexceptionable as relates to her conduct, but there is a quiet look of self-immolation about her, that makes my very heart ache when I look into her face; and I long to fold her to my bosom, and cherish her with the fond warm feelings of a father. I cannot bear that one so young and gentle should be subjected to so much sorrow and suffering as I know she bears. But Heaven is gracious, and there is no doubt the poor child has her pleasures, perhaps the more intense for their rarity."

"Yes, I am sure she has her pleasures," exclaimed Terence with warmth, "and will have, so long as there remains one living thing to be made happier by her kindness. And now for your little friend Harriet, what say you of the effect of Mr. Grey's discipline upon such a temper as hers?"

"Ah! my good fellow," said Mr. Malone,

with a prophetic shake of the head, "Harriet is a delightful child to play with, but a character like hers, when her passions strengthen, and her feelings expand, will need some more powerful restraint than that of mere authority. Already you see she heeds it not, but spurns at it, and contemns it altogether; and when once her external fetters are broken, she is at the mercy of every temptation; for I do not see that on any one point her father's domestic solicitude has reached her heart, except so as to make her either sport with his anger, or elude his vigilance."

Such were the discussions often held by Terence and his father, since their acquaintance with the Greys had opened to the youth a new view of human life; and now that a temporary separation had taken place, they found more leisure for speaking on a subject which had gradually become deeply interesting to both. And, although Terence still harped upon the efficacy of a rebellious kick, he felt

so severely the loss of the society of his friends, that for their sakes he would almost have condescended to humble himself to their father.

In the mean time all was dark and cloudy within the dwelling to which they looked with earnest longings to see the agile figure of Allan Grey bounding over the lawn, as they knew he would, in the first moment of escape from the strictest prohibition. They looked, however, in vain; for an injunction, powerful as the ban of an evil destiny, bound the luckless inmates of that prison-house to a scrupulous abstinence from all intercourse with those of the Abbey.

It had been a punishment in perfect accordance with Stephen Grey's sentiments and mode of acting, to compel his children, on the evening of the play, to sit down with him at table in their motley attire, and to make them bear the keen inspection of his scrutinizing eye under those indubitable marks of their folly and disobedience. Unaccustomed on

such occasions to use a greater number of words than were necessary to the infliction of a certain degree of pain, after a long and solemn pause, he demanded of Allan where he had learned to play upon that stringed instrument.

"I learned of Terence Malone," said Allan.

"An eligible tutor," was the laconic reply.

His next question, addressed to Mary, related to the part she had taken in the evening's entertainment.

"I took no part in the acting," said she; but suddenly recollecting that this answer did not convey the *whole* truth, she added, "I only assisted in dressing, and making preparations for the scenes."

"Then you were art and part, to all intents and purposes, and just as culpable as the rest."

"I was," said Mary.

"And did you assist in dressing, Mr. James?"

"No," was the ready and satisfactory reply.

"I am glad," observed his father, "to find there is one rational and respectable being amongst you."

James was silent, though a slight flush passed over his countenance: for his conscience told him that the eyes of all the party were upon him, and that a more candid explanation than this was expected; and what was of more importance to him, was likely enough to be demanded. But still he was silent, and as no one seemed inclined to betray his secret, he began to look about him with more confidence. George, however, had by this time, gathered up his pouting lips, and shaped them into a position for speaking the truth, when a sharp kick under the table warned him of the private retribution he must expect to meet with, if he did. No more direct inquiries being made that night, after a solemn and lengthy harangue upon the immorality of theatrical amusements, the party separated; those who retained the badge of their delin-

quency, well pleased to doff their borrowed plumes.

At the breakfast table next morning, no cheerful face was to be seen, but downcast eyes, silent lips, and cheeks that bore the traces of recent tears; for the sentence had gone forth, that no communion should be held with the inmates of the Abbey, and still smarting under the lash of their father's displeasure, it was too early to begin to dream of disobeying his most imperative command.

Long and dismal was the first day of privation to the little group, who had been accustomed to extract more individual satisfaction than they were themselves aware of, from the forbidden source.

"Who will teach me to dance now?" said Harriet, always the first to speak of what others could only feel. "George, where will you find peaches like those in the Abbey garden? Allan, you will never be able to finish Schiller's plays. And what will you

do, Mary, when any one speaks rudely to you, without Terence to fight them for it?"

"I shall do very badly," said Mary with a sigh; "but since it is my father's wish, suppose we try to make the best of it, and if we show no inclination to do what he really dislikes, perhaps he will trust us in time to visit the Abbey again."

"I know we can manage it," said James, "if we all keep up a show of obedience."

"Ah! that is always your way," said George; "you make a good show, and then do every thing you like, without being found fault with. You are just like the man in the play, that Mr. Malone was reading. But I'll tell of you, Master Surface, that I will."

A box on the ear, and an authoritative call to morning lessons, soon silenced this redoubtable champion of truth; and the routine of their daily duties being gone through, with more languor than usual, they prepared for the return of their father without pleasure, and without hope.

Stephen Grey had all the day been thinking it was possible he might carry his severity too far. Indeed, he had too much real regard for his children to be quite satisfied with the gloom under which he left them, imagining as he did that it was in his own power to clear it all away. To retract one iota of his injunctions on the point of offence, would be to compromise his dignity—a condescension to which he never, on any occasion, bent his stubborn will. But might he not gratify his children in some other way? And he cast about in his own mind to devise what prudent indulgence would be most agreeable to them. They were fond of company. Was there none but Irish society to be had? Yes. He had two worthy friends in the town, who had two well-behaved, well-educated daughters, and as they had just returned from boarding school, he thought it would be the right time to ask them to spend a few days at Welbourne House.

Full of the satisfaction this luminous idea

afforded him, Stephen Grey returned home half an hour earlier than usual; and when the business of drinking tea had been discussed, and his family had seated themselves in silent gravity around the smooth bright table, he opened the affair of the anticipated visit, in his usually dry and formal manner.

To his great disappointment nobody looked pleased, except James, and again the parental bosom expanded itself to receive him within the circle of its warmest affections. Harriet smiled—nay, even laughed; but it was with anything rather than pleasure, for the absurdity of inviting two town-bred misses, with whom they had never exchanged a word, struck her as being irresistibly ridiculous.

"You must have all things ready for their reception," added Stephen Grey, "for they return with me to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" exclaimed Mary, with something like a gasp of horror.

"Yes, to-morrow, without fail," replied her

father hastily. "If I were to invite Terence Malone to meet them, I suppose you would look more hospitable."

Mary blushed the deepest crimson, from indignation as well as shame, for humble as she was in all her individual pretensions, few persons could feel an unjust or ungenerous remark more warmly; and after her blushes had been succeeded by tears, she had the additional pain of thinking that she had now no kind friend to take her part; for though Allan was always willing, he was so much out of favour himself, as not unfrequently to draw down upon others the wrath he attempted to avert.

"A pretty joke!" exclaimed Harriet, as soon as they were left at liberty to speak with freedom. "I think my father must be going to marry again, and is bringing our young step-mother to see how she likes us. For I can see no other reason why he should invite these misses."

"I dare say he wishes to please us," said

Mary; "and perhaps if we were all to try to think the best we can of his guests, we should not find them so disagreeable as we expect."

"They are highly accomplished girls," observed James, "and I should be truly glad if my sisters were equally companionable."

"That is exactly what I say," retorted Harriet. "It is our own unworthiness that makes us shrink before my father's friends. I doubt none of the accomplishments of your angels—that they play and sing divinely; but you must remember we have no piano, and if they should wish to charm us with their sweet voices, I don't know where we shall find an accompaniment, unless we send and borrow Mr. Malone's fiddle for *you*."

The fact was, that with his wonted ignorance of the tastes and feelings of those around him, Stephen Grey had selected, for the sole purpose of gratifying his children, two of the least congenial companions he could have found in the whole circle of his friends. On

the first evening of their arrival, they came down stairs in full dress to an early tea, as simply set forth, as if it had been prepared solely to quench the thirst, and allay the hunger of a farmer's family.

Early meals were what the Misses Stanley had been taught to consider as associated with a degree of vulgarity not to be endured; and after looking round upon the plain solid furniture of Welbourne House, they sipped their tea with the most ineffable contempt. Scarcely a word was spoken, even about the weather, or the state of the roads, or the scenery around Welbourne; for the Greys were so unaccustomed to converse before their father, that they seldom, even on more inviting occasions, risked so much as the most commonplace remark. James, alone, evinced his grateful sense of the presence of the young ladies, by silently placing before them large plates of toast, and bread, from which their delicate senses seemed to recoil; while Ste-

phen Grey, just sufficiently alive to the real state of things, to perceive that his children were a little shy of making advances to their new friends, exerted himself to be as talkative as his limited acquaintance with the habits of the female sex would allow. Still it was a long evening to all parties, and well-bred as the lady visitors were, Mary detected them yawning and exchanging weary, listless glances with each other, long before the usual time of retiring to rest.

"I dare say you are tired with your ride," said Mary.

The young ladies acknowledged that they were, and candles being immediately lighted, the parties were mutually relieved by an early separation for the night.

We will not so far betray the secrets of the private chamber, as to relate what passed between Miss Stanley and her sister, as soon as they found themselves alone; because there is some reason to suspect that the conviction

of having been trepanned into a long dull visit, from which there is no chance of escape, will occasionally give rise to remarks, neither just nor flattering to the entertainers of such guests, who, on their part, are equal, if not greater sufferers. It is sufficient to say, that when the ladies rose on the following morning, they saw, with extreme consternation, large drops of heavy rain upon the windows; and on looking out, perceived a general cloudiness and humidity in the atmosphere, betokening the miseries of close confinement, or, in lieu of these, the still greater miseries of soiled slippers, spotted satins, and uncurled ringlets.

The only thing Stephen Grey could do that morning to make every body more uncomfortable, he did, though quite unconsciously—he took his son James with him to town; for James, from being the oldest in the family, fully conscious of his advantages, and much inclined to exhibit the first fruits of his gal-

lantry in the presence of the Stanleys, had begun to appear a little tolerable in their eyes; and ready as he always was to act upon the principle of *looking* pleased with every proposition emanating from his father, it cost him no trifling exertion on the present occasion to maintain his character, when the carriage was at the door, the loud "Come James," vociferated in the hall, and Miss Stanley smiling her sweetest adieus beside the parlour fire.

The younger part of the family had been graciously allowed an exemption from their wonted studies for the sole benefit of their guests; and such was the use they made of this indulgence, that no sooner had the sound of the carriage wheels died away, than Allan flew to his own chamber, there to complete a beautiful drawing of the Abbey, George went out to ramble in the fields with James's dog, and Harriet amused herself as she could in any way, and in any place that might secure her from the presence of her father's guests. Mary

as usual remained alone at the post of duty; and when she saw the young ladies draw on their white kid gloves and seat themselves in evident expectation of being entertained, her heart sank within her, and she too would have escaped, had she not been accustomed to consider herself responsible for the credit as well as the comfort of her father's family.

In vain did she cast her eye upon the book shelves. Nothing was there but hard bound histories seldom opened, and treatises on education, and religious controversies, interspersed with law and physic, all packed close and tight, and looking as immoveable as the wooden mockeries that constitute a sham library. No beautiful ephemera, with its gilded leaves, lay on the table or the work stand, like a butterfly with folded wings, waiting to display, at the first touch of fair fingers, all the gorgeous beauties that can delight the eye. No fanciful engravings of female charms, some languid, some coquettish,

and some inspired, were spread forth to tempt the idle jest, or passing comment. Except for the furniture, all placed methodically, and looking rather as if it had been recently arranged, than recently used, the apartment presented an aspect of complete vacuity; and Mary feeling in her own mind something of the same dead blank, which the company of uncongenial visitors infallibly produces, made some apology for absenting herself, and went to her domestic duties, determined if possible to shake off the leaden weight that seemed to grow upon her.

There was one object so dear, and in Mary's eyes so beautiful, as seldom to meet her anxious and affectionate gaze without inspiring those thoughts and feelings of which the heart holds the fondest and most faithful record. It was her sister Ellen, her peculiar charge, now escaping rapidly from the insignificance of childhood, and coming forth arrayed in all the loveliness of youth, and health, and hap-

piness. Nor was this all. Nature had gifted Ellen Grey with features, whose perfect symmetry defied alike the captiousness of the critical, and the sneer of the envious; and with a complexion not of the unnatural whiteness of snow, but of a living, glowing, yet transparent splendour, that combined the most exquisite delicacy with the richest bloom. Her eyes were hazel, and of uncommon brightness; while around her brow and temples there waved a profusion of auburn curls, which, whether carefully arranged or pressed down by the hand of affection, sprung again into their wild luxuriant beauty, to which nature had contributed so much, that it was impossible for art to take anything away.

Under the management of an experienced and judicious mother, Ellen would probably have been as amiable as she was lovely; but Mary, acquainted only with that part of education which was marked by the exercise of too great severity, believed she was doing the

greatest kindness to her sister by permitting her to enjoy the opposite extreme of too much indulgence. She was, besides, so disinterested in her own feelings, and so willing to yield any point in which her own gratification was concerned, that Ellen scrupled not to make the most unreasonable demands upon her time, her patience, or her generosity; and seldom having found herself disappointed, she learned, in time, to regard her own wishes as of more importance than those of any other human being. In addition to the disadvantage arising from Mary's over indulgence, Ellen was the youngest in the family, and a beauty—two circumstances which she was by no means backward in turning to her own account; and such was the attractiveness of her light, playful figure, her easy, graceful movements, and the indescribable loveliness of her countenance, that she found a ready passport to every acquaintance she deemed it worth her while to cultivate, and seldom

was denied any favour upon which her mind happened to be fixed.

So entirely had Ellen hitherto been considered as Mary's charge, that, except on some extraordinary occasions, her father's authority had scarcely crossed her will. Whenever this happened, a tremendous explosion was the consequence, from which Mary, who could not protect, and dared not defend her, was always the greatest sufferer. Yet, like a fond mother, she felt her sufferings, her tears and anxieties, all repaid by the affectionate caresses of her wayward child; and when she led her by the hand into the presence of her father's guests, it was with full confidence that they would find in her an object of sufficient admiration and interest to engage their attention, without feeling the want of books, or music, or any other amusement to which they might have been accustomed.

Attracted by the richness and beauty of

the Stanleys' dresses, Ellen made her wonted easy, childish, and winning advances; but had the unexpected mortification of finding them unnoticed. She approached their persons on some trifling pretext, and the elder lady drew up her shining silk frock, as if to preserve it from the trampling of a rude animal. Not easily repulsed, she next gathered a flower and presented it to the younger, who never could bear the scent of geraniums. At home they had a greenhouse on purpose for geraniums, where this refined being assured the child she never entered. What could poor Ellen do? She persevered, however, for some time, believing it impossible but that such beautiful rings, ribbons, and bracelets must be accompanied with a great deal that was to be loved as well as admired.

Mary all the while was looking on with the jealous eye of a mother, who watches the introduction of her child, and marks down, on

a tablet, from which no after event can efface the record, those individuals who have fondly stooped to its caresses, as well as those who have closed their eyes to its beauty, and steeled their hearts against its winning graces.

"These girls have no feeling," said Mary to herself; "no sense of what is lovely; none of those affections, without which it would be wearisome to live;" and thus, her last resource having failed, she quietly took out her work and sat down, in utter despair of being able to entertain her guests.

There are many perplexities and trials in rural life, which those who have heard only of its Arcadian felicity are little aware of. Amongst these, and by no means the least important, is the endurance of visitors who bring no work—who seat themselves by ten o'clock in the morning, a dead weight upon their friends, and cast appealing looks around them for the amusement with which they

should have provided themselves as soon as they accepted the invitation.

Such visitors ought to be informed, that it is not always summer in the country, that strawberries are not always ripe, nor rose trees in "full bearing;" but that early meals, and quiet days, with the absence of morning calls, leave many hours for the uninterrupted exercise of earnest thought, and interesting conversation, with which a rational and cultivated mind is seldom wearied.

Heavy indeed was the first long day of the Stanleys' visit at Welbourne House, both to them and to Mary; and many were the anxious glances cast towards the merciless time-piece, which told the tardy hours, unmarked by any thing but their intolerable length.

When James and his father returned in the evening, the countenances of the ladies wore a brighter character, for it sometimes happens that a brother is far more capable of amusing

than his sister, though not more highly gifted with conversational powers. Still a dense kind of heaviness hung over all the party, which even Stephen Grey perceived; and recollecting the reputed accomplishments of his young friends, he began to question whether something in their way might not be brought forward by his own children. He had heard, by chance, of Allan's taste for drawing, but deeming it an idle and unprofitable employment for one in his situation, had never so much as cast his eye upon any of his performances, with a view to their merit. This was a time, however, when he thought they might answer the purpose of lawful amusement; and Miss Stanley might, perhaps, take the trouble to give her opinion of them, and point out their faults. The bell accordingly was rung, and Allan sent for.

"Bring down your drawings for the young ladies to see," said his father.

"Drawings?" exclaimed Allan, as if alto-

gether unconscious of possessing any thing that could be classed under such a name.

"Yes, drawings!" replied his father; "the Miss Stanleys have been instructed by the first masters in town; and if you must draw, it will be an advantage to have their advice."

"Drawings?" said Allan again, in a tone less inquisitive than desponding.

"Why do you repeat my words?" exclaimed his father angrily. "Bring down your drawings immediately, or I will bring them myself."

Allan answered not, but his burning cheek betrayed the triumph of his resolution over his fears. He knew there was no possibility of appeal or delay, and that his most secret hiding-places were not secure from violation.

No time was to be lost; for when once Stephen Grey perceived symptoms of obstinacy or disobedience, the suspected person was hunted down, and every means of escape, or possibility of evasion, strictly and forcibly

cut off. There was no time to cast a lingering look upon the favourite scenes, — the faint imperfect sketches of the sheltered bank, the bridge, or the oak with knotted roots, beside which he and Mary and Terence had been so happy; but sweeping them away with one desperate effort, he hurried down to the kitchen fire, and hurled them into the devouring flames.

We have no wish to justify this act, or to maintain that it did not betray an obstinate recklessness, both dangerous and culpable in one so young. But it was done without reflection, and resorted to as the only means of escaping from a misery less endurable than the loss, great as it unquestionably was to a young artist; and we have no hesitation in saying, that had love instead of fear been the prevailing sentiment in the heart of the boy, it would never have been done.

The smothered anger with which Stephen Grey, for the sake of his guests, received the

intelligence communicated by George, seemed only to add to the increasing contempt he felt for the general character of Allan. Another disputed point, however, remained to be settled between him and his children before he took cognizance of this particular fault. This point was the cultivation of a better acquaintance with their visitors, and here he determined neither to be outwitted, nor openly defied. He had planned the visit entirely for their pleasure, and while he remained fixed in the belief that his influence ought to be such as to compel them to be pleased, he had lately had such serious misgivings on this subject, as to deem it wisest to condescend a little to their tastes. And for this purpose he stooped to propose what he had no doubt would meet with their cheerful accordance, and prompt adoption. Having seen that his children were so blindly and foolishly delighted with the prospect of a theatrical exhibition, as to grieve for many days over the disappointment of

being denied the fulfilment of their idle wishes, he thought something of the same kind might be got up in a rational and harmless way in his own house, while it was honoured with the presence of the Stanleys. His idea of the entertainment went no farther than a few set speeches, selected from the Roman history; and as Allan and Harriet had been the two detected performers on the memorable night, he fixed upon them to personate two Roman senators, who should argue an important cause involving the good of the commonwealth.

On the first communication of this plan, Harriet burst into a laugh, which not even her father's presence was able to restrain; while Allan, after a look of blank astonishment began to calculate the strength of his arm if he should resist, or the swiftness of his feet if he should run away. But recollecting the utter fruitlessness of exerting his own bodily power, and the many painful feelings his obstinacy might occasion in the family, he submitted

silently, yet with the burning tears of indignation sparkling in his eyes. The consciousness of the ridiculous figure they should be compelled to make, with their utter inability to do credit to their parts under the restraint always imposed upon them by their father's presence, affected the brother and the sister so differently, that it seemed as if Harriet would never cease to laugh, and as if Allan would never laugh again.

The evening of the exhibition was the last of the Stanleys' visit. No pains had been spared to render the performers perfect in their parts. Old records and old prints had been brought from town every day, in order that the Roman dresses might be made exactly to the pattern of the times. To Mary's charge this important duty was committed, as well as that of hearing the speeches repeated, until every word could be pronounced without hesitation. It was her duty also to encourage the speakers, which she did with all her eloquence and

kindness, but with little effect; for the lurking smiles of Miss Stanley and her sister betrayed but too plainly how fully they could appreciate the absurdity of the scene.

At last the hated moment drew near, and Allan, agitated equally with terror and disgust, hurried along the passage leading into the presence, and appeared in his Roman costume upon the temporary stage, infinitely more like a school-boy repeating his task in his nightgown, than a senator of the ancient city arguing upon public measures that were to influence half the world; while Harriet looked a few degrees more ridiculous than her brother, because of her smaller size, her insignificant face, and the irresistible propensity to giggle, constantly interrupting her performance. It was soon, however, too evident that her laughter was hysterical; and just as she lifted up her little hand, and exclaimed with her loudest emphasis, "Romans and citizens!" her disorder having reached its crisis, took a

lachrymose turn, and sobs, loud and convulsive as ever issued from a nursery, burst from her lips, and put a stop to the expression of her patriotic enthusiasm. It was high time for the scene to close. Mary, without waiting for a signal from her father, led the weeping senator off the stage, and Allan followed in their steps, too well pleased with his escape to feel much compassion for his sister's tears.

Stephen Grey looked rather blank at this melancholy conclusion of the device he had invented solely for the purpose of giving pleasure; but never having seen the interior of a theatre, he was not so well aware as some others, of the deficiency in his children's performance, or in the exhibition altogether. Turning to his guests, he observed, "I now wonder more than ever, Miss Stanley, that not only the common people, but men of business and respectability, can waste so much of their lives in resorting to entertainments of this kind."

The ladies exchanged glances with each other, but made no remark. They were not surprised that Mr. Grey should underrate the entertainment afforded by theatrical exhibitions, if this was the only specimen he had ever witnessed. Indeed, they did not wonder at any absurdity committed by a family so ignorant of the world as this; and glad at heart were they—as glad even as their hospitable friends—when the next morning restored them to their parents, to that dear world from which they hoped never to be separated again, and to the unspeakable privilege of commenting upon the stupidity of the Greys without being overheard.

CHAPTER IX.

It was not possible that Stephen Grey should continue to govern his children, as they advanced in years, by the same rules which had regulated their childhood. Authority on one side, without a wish to please on the other, does very little towards establishing the internal structure of a well-conducted family, and still less towards promoting the individual comfort of its members. As the impulses of childhood strengthened into the more powerful inclinations and deeper passions of youth—as imagination began to unfold itself, and individual character became marked by peculiar preferences and antipathies, the disposition to

rebel against, rather than elude restraint, naturally gained ground; and this disposition, increasingly evident in his children, rendered Stephen Grey not only harsh, but irritable, in proportion as he felt his own inability to enforce entire submission; while the constant strife, the heartburnings, the bitterness, the reproaches which ensued, rendered Welbourne House a scene of much discomfort and dissatisfaction to its inmates. Not that any thing so flagrant as open defiance was even apprehended, but the once passive and obedient boys and girls would grow up to men and women, and, as such, they longed more and more for the power of acting independently, and thinking for themselves.

The impatience of the oldest son to enter upon some employment more congenial to his taste, more manly, or, perhaps, more *gentlemanly*, than that of teaching his brothers and sisters at home, being at last satisfied by allowing him to choose his profession, he de-

cided upon devoting his talents to the bar; and after the most studious and careful preparation, and a solemn exordium upon the fate of George Barnwell, followed by many serious warnings, he was sent to learn the mysteries of his future calling with an eminent solicitor in London.

The head being now removed, it was necessary to care for the other members; and here again Stephen Grey believed, for some time, that nothing was necessary but authority, prudently and strictly exercised, to make the members care for themselves. He commanded them to study during the hours of his absence each day, with the same punctuality as if James had been present. He set before them the advantages of a good education, and the privileges they enjoyed in having books and leisure for the improvement of their minds; and then, leaving them to profit by his exhortations, the consequence was as might have been expected—he was deceived: for, first, having agreed to study alone, they betook themselves to their

separate amusements, not forgetting to be within call, with a book in their hands, when their father should return from town.

Mary alone employed herself as duty dictated, in teaching her sister Ellen ; while, upon her serious mind rested all the anxiety of seeing the rest of the family spend their days in idleness, and the additional perplexity of not knowing how to remedy the evil. At length she summoned all her courage ; and one evening, when her father and she were alone, ventured to lay before him the advantages of sending her brothers and sister Harriet to school.

" Schools are very expensive," observed Stephen Grey ; " I am afraid they are idle at home, or why should you have thought of school. Are they idle, Mary ?"

" They are much like other young people," replied Mary ; " I do not think they study so as to improve themselves much."

" Eh ? what ?" exclaimed her father ; " don't they keep regular hours ?—don't they learn

set tasks? Tell me the truth, or it may be worse for you all."

"I am afraid they do not," replied Mary; "but"—and she would have added all that could be said in extenuation of their fault, had not her father risen from his chair, and, after ringing the bell violently, ordered George, Allan, and Harriet to appear before him.

As soon as they had obeyed the unwelcome summons, Stephen Grey began his lecture by telling them he *understood* they were not attentive to their studies—he *understood* they were idle, kept no regular hours, and many other particulars of their delinquency, which, added together, fixed the stigma of a tell-tale upon their sister Mary; and as she sat, silently suffering under this suspicion, she saw that reproachful glances were cast towards her by George and Harriet, though not by Allan, for he would sooner have believed that he himself had acted meanly, than have suspected such a thing of Mary.

This long and angry lecture having con-

cluded as usual with repeated charges, and repeated threats, all which passed off like empty air, to be disregarded as soon as opportunity afforded the means of transgressing again, it was not difficult for Mary to clear herself from the odium of having told the truth for the purpose of making mischief, for no one dared to doubt her word, and there was always a predisposition to believe her guiltless of ill-nature.

Still her mind was far from being at ease on the important point she had touched upon with so little success; and her father happening to return one day when none of the three culprits were to be found, she took the opportunity to press again the subject of their being sent to school. Once more her father threatened, and this time he actually stormed; but on trying them again by returning home earlier than usual, the case was just the same. What was to be done? He was virtually sacrificing his dignity by suffering

such a state of misrule to exist. And as there was no law by which his children could be fastened down to their seats, and compelled, under pain of bodily suffering, to repeat a certain number of Greek or Latin verses each day, he resolved at last to adopt Mary's plan, but to do it in such a manner as should make it appear a punishment rather than an expedient.

The glad tidings of their father's decision were, however, received as the very reverse of a punishment by the young people, who were but too well pleased with the chance of escaping from a home associated in their minds with little else than terror and gloom; and when they departed for the first time from their father's house, to try their unknown fate amongst strangers, it was to Mary alone that they felt any pain at bidding adieu.

George being considerably too old, though by no means too highly accomplished, to be

sent to a common seminary, he had been allowed to make his choice of a *business*, not a profession; and the life of a farmer being, in his sapient mind, connected with the advantages of unbounded freedom and good fare, he was dispatched to the residence of a neighbouring grazier, a few days after Allan and Harriet had departed on their different destinations.

"These schools are very expensive," said Stephen Grey to his daughter, one day when they were seated alone. "I have been thinking, since we are so small a family, that I might let this house for a year or so. It stands, as people say, pleasantly, in a fine, well cultivated district; and then you and little Ellen might go to my cousin Lee. There is less danger to be apprehended in her family, now that the rude boy, Elliott, is away."

"And you, father," said Mary, touched with the lonely situation in which her parent

would be left, and half inclined to forego the long anticipated pleasure of visiting her friend, for the sake of comforting her father.

"I shall take lodgings near my office," replied Stephen Grey. "It will afford me an opportunity of putting away my horse for a few months; and now that we talk the plan over, it pleases me well, and I would have you be ready as soon as you can, for I shall write to cousin Lee by the next post."

It is not to be supposed that all this time had passed without the inmates of the Abbey being more frequently thought of, than they have been mentioned here; or that, considering they were separated from Welbourne House only by a few fields, there should not have been plausible excuses found for both parties overstepping the prescribed limits; though the communication carried on between them was much more secret, and less frequent than before. Terence had been the first to transgress, Allan the next; and on the eve of

his departure from home, the two friends were alone together for more than an hour, within sight of a signal by which Mary had promised to give them notice if Allan should be called for.

The time being now come for Mary to gather together the remnant of her own and Ellen's frugal wardrobe, she could not help wondering whether Terence would take any pains to see her too, before she went. A gentle tap at the window, such as none but a listening ear could have detected, convinced her that she was not forgotten; and committing the rest of the packing to Ellen's charge, she hastened to the garden, just to bid him good bye as she stood upon the steps.

"Will you not come down to me, Mary?" said Terence, in a voice so low and sorrowful, that it scarcely sounded like his own. "Will you not come down and walk once round the garden with me? Perhaps we shall never meet again."

Mary, who had not been prepared for

any thing different from his wonted cheerful manner, found herself in a few moments walking by his side, quite unconscious of the impulse which had brought her there; and when they stood together by the old garden seat under the yew tree, and Terence drew his arm around her waist, and, leaning his head upon her shoulder, almost sobbed aloud, Mary for the first time in her life forgot her duties in a kind of delirium she was wholly at a loss to understand.

"You are all going to leave us," said the forlorn and miserable boy, as soon as he regained the power of utterance. "Whether it is because you are going the last, I know not, but I feel as if I could not—would not part with you. Ah, Mary, we never know how well we love our friends till we are about to be separated for ever!"

"Terence," said Mary, "you have a kind father, a happy home, and your excellent spirits will soon return."

"My father is not what he was, Mary,

though always kind. I think he has troubles which he does not tell; and his health, too, seems to me as if it failed him. If I should lose my father, I should be desolate indeed."

"We shall soon come back to you, Terence."

"How soon?"

"In a year."

"A year! And can you call that soon! A year of pleasure is so much that it suffices for one man's life; but when you talk of a year of misery, it swells into ages! I care for no good that is promised me, if a whole year must come between it and me."

"How ungrateful you are, Terence, for the blessings of hope."

"Oh, Mary, I like possession so much better than hope, that while I hold you here I am satisfied."

"Your satisfaction must soon be over, then, for it is time we should say farewell. You will think of me sometimes, I am sure,

Terence, but there is one thing besides I wish you would think of for my sake."

"What is that, Mary? I can never forget, if you make it your parting charge."

"It is that you will curb your wild spirit, and remember what is due to others, even when they are not the persons you most admire."

"Well, I will do my best, if you will love me better for it."

"I do not say that; but I am sure I shall be less unhappy—less anxious about you than I am."

"And in return you will promise me one thing, Mary;" and Terence hung down his head, for he was not quite sure his request was reasonable, or that it would be well received.

"Speak freely," said Mary, "we have no time to lose."

"Then look another way," said Terence; "I cannot speak out while your eyes are upon me."

"Go on," said Mary, with her face averted.

"Well, then, it is, that when that fine handsome fellow, Elliott Lee, comes home"—

"What then?"

"That you will not love him better than you love me."

"I shall not see Elliott, I believe."

"That is nothing to my purpose. I say if you do see him, you must not love him better than you love me."

"I do not think I shall."

"Do not think, Mary! You must promise me this. You must make a solemn vow beneath the stars this night;"—and the enthusiast ran on with all the volubility of a true son of green Erin, until Mary, half frightened and half ashamed, tore herself from his embraces, and hastening to the door, only stayed her steps for one moment to bid him an affectionate and sorrowful farewell, which had more deep and genuine feeling in it, than all his rapturous expressions, sincere as they were for the time.

The following morning Mary and her sister Ellen bade adieu to their paternal home, and, under the protection of an old domestic, pursued their first journey in perfect safety.

Mrs. Lee had been much gratified, and not a little amused with the idea of her stern relative committing the charge of his two daughters to one whose principle of moral education he had so often and so severely condemned; but whatever might have been his motive in doing this, she was too well pleased with the measure so unexpectedly adopted, to remind him, even in the way of good-humoured raillery, of the contempt he had been wont to express for her system of dangerous and culpable indulgence.

Since the period of Elliott's being placed in one of those classical establishments where young gentlemen, even of mature years, frequently go to pursue their studies previous to entering upon a college life, the mother and her two remaining children had lived in a much

more regular and quiet manner; for to say the truth of Elliott, there was a restlessness in his nature—a querulous dissatisfaction with every thing that fell short of his ideas of perfection, which, combined with a too evident sense of superiority, derived in part from the circumstance of his being sole heir to his grandfather's property, rendered him by no means the most satisfactory inmate of a small domestic family. Still he was kind-hearted, generous, and sometimes a most interesting companion; and if filial affection had needed nothing more than sudden ebullitions of tenderness to prove its value, Elliott Lee would have been one of the best of sons. It was his extreme fastidiousness in all the common concerns of life, connected with a haughty temper, that spurned at feminine control, which had induced Mrs. Lee to remove him to a situation where he might, by association with the world in miniature, learn the real value of his home comforts, as well as that grand lesson, of such importance

in the voyage of life, that without it we are sure to make shipwreck of our own and others' peace—the necessity of bearing and forbearing.

The genuine pleasure with which Mrs. Lee received the travellers after their long day's journey, was somewhat damped by the arrival of a letter on the same day from the superintendent of the establishment where Elliott was placed, alluding to an act of rebellion of which her son had been guilty, and hinting at the necessity of expulsion, if his present contumacious spirit were not subdued; but leaving the particulars of the story for painful conjecture, and the distressing exaggeration of anxious and indefinite thoughts.

It was not customary with this excellent woman to suffer her own peculiar trials and perplexities to break in upon the enjoyment of others, still less to trouble young minds with burdens beyond their power to lighten; she therefore kept the contents of this letter for her own private meditation, secure that

time would develope its mystery, and almost equally confident that Elliott would not be backward to tell his own unvarnished tale.

In the mean time Mary Grey was entering upon a new life, with sensations resembling those we might suppose a freshly created spirit to feel, on first walking the fields of Paradise. Here was no fear, and that exemption from a customary evil was of itself sufficient for a time to satisfy an unambitious soul like hers. In the next place, she had the constant companionship of those she loved, and to whom she dared communicate her thoughts; above all, of a friend whose mind, in many respects resembling her own, was enlightened with higher attainments, and having been cherished in a more genial atmosphere, was consequently more buoyant and more enterprising.

Catherine Lee was a fine, dignified, handsome girl, about the age of Mary, with the same warm affections, and the same refinement of feeling; but wholly free, both from

suffering and anticipating the blight which such affections, under Mary's circumstances, seem to bring upon themselves, as well as from the morbid sensitiveness almost invariably accompanying extreme refinement, when slighted or abused. Mary, however, was far from being morbid, though subject to incalculable suffering from all the incidents of life, arising out of the unkindness or culpability of others. But with her exquisite sensibility, nature had combined an equanimity of temper, that, while it enabled her to maintain a singular degree of composure under the most trying circumstances, at the same time shielded her from many attacks which might otherwise have been destructive of her internal peace. Catherine, unlike her friend in this respect, while she possessed what is called an excellent temper, was more impetuous, and more enthusiastic, from never having known in infancy the sad consequences of unnatural fear.

Herbert Lee was a youth of fine talents, and, if possible, more amiable than his sister; but a delicate constitution, and a partiality almost amounting to a passion for study, prevented his taking much interest in the ordinary events of life. Elliott, who almost doted on his sister, had no great reverence for the quiet virtues of his brother; and one reason for his being sent from home, was a practice he addicted himself to, of making the slender frame and studious habits of Herbert, the constant theme of his ridicule and satire.

With the beauty of Ellen Grey, Mrs. Lee and her daughter were no less delighted than astonished. From the circumstance of her being the youngest in the family, they had not been accustomed to regard her as so old as she really was; but her personal charms rapidly advancing to maturity, began already to blend something of the gentleness of a woman with the playfulness of a child. It soon became an object of solicitude with her

kind relatives to promote the simultaneous advancement of her mind, and Mary, who deeply felt her own deficiency in the usual acquirements of her sex, took advantage of all the privileges of her present situation, for supplying, as far as she could, the want of more method and regularity in her previous education.

The pleasure of reading aloud with a family who could all enjoy the same book, was one entirely new to Mary; and when she found that Mrs. Lee, by allowing a judicious selection of works of fiction to appear in her common library, and by herself proposing amusements to her children, and sharing in them, prevented the dangerous inclination to secrete improper books, or to secure forbidden pleasures by unlawful means, she was almost tempted to envy those whose privilege it was to breathe in an atmosphere of freedom, and to be at once rational and happy.

"We have never been accustomed to hide

any thing from my mother," said Catherine. "She reads the same books that we do, and as she knows so much more of the world, and of literature in general, if she tells us that any book is not worthy, or not fit to be read, we are quite satisfied, and think no more about it."

"You are very good," observed Mary, with perfect simplicity.

"No, you mistake me," replied Catherine, smiling; "we are not so good as you suppose. If we had no other agreeable books, I dare say we should continue to wish for those that are forbidden; but it has always been my mother's practice, when she denied us one pleasure, to point out a substitute; so that instead of repining for what we ought not to have, we passed on to something else, and forgot it."

"Mrs. Lee must have had a great many nice things at her disposal," exclaimed Ellen, rather puzzled to imagine where all these pleasures came from.

"You mistake me again," said Catherine. "Very little money has ever been spent upon our enjoyments. The principle upon which my mother acted, was to teach us to find pleasure in the simplest things, and to enjoy freely and innocently, but I might almost say, *intensely,* the blessings constantly around us."

"And how did she do this?" inquired Mary, struck with a totally new idea.

"Chiefly, I think, by entering into them with cheerfulness herself; but beyond this, by pointing out what we should never have thought of,—their real nature,—their tendency,—their association with other things,—and above all, as far as she could discover it, their agency in the great scheme of wisdom and mercy by which the world is governed."

It was indeed by such means, that Mrs. Lee maintained almost unbounded influence over her children's habits, as well as their affections; and so completely were their ideas of their mother's happiness, as well as

their own, and that of mankind in general, identified with the practice of every virtue, that the misery of having acted contrary to the dictates of conscience, and, consequently, to their mother's wishes, proved, on most occasions, of sufficient force to bring them back to the path of duty.

With her oldest son, it is true, this motive was not always sufficient; for while he felt the misery with no less intensity than the others, he had a stronger will, and more violent passions to contend with. The anxiety his mother now experienced, and to which she sometimes yielded in her solitary hours, was not altogether grounded upon the mysterious letter already alluded to; nor was the present the only trial which had been made of Elliott's submission to the rules of a public school. It was now some years since the first unsuccessful experiment had been made; and though the boy was not literally expelled, he brought home with him a gentle insinuation from his masters that his mother would do

well to change the scene of his scholastic studies; and in his own heart, so unconquerable a disgust for the school, that Mrs. Lee deemed it scarcely prudent to send him to the same again.

The origin of this disgust, Elliott frankly and candidly explained to his mother; and although she reasoned with him coolly and impartially upon the part he had acted in the affair, he never could be brought to think himself so culpable as he really was, or to speak on the subject without declaring, that under similar provocation, he would do the same again.

This momentous event, which raised the boy in his own estimation, as much as it lowered him in that of his superiors, occurred a few weeks after his entering the school. Like a dutiful son, he had, previously to that time, adhered faithfully to his mother's advice, that he should read, privately, a chapter in the bible every morning before he mixed with his companions, or entered upon the duties of

the day. Having unfortunately over-slept himself one morning, he stole into the garden, determined to risk the loss of his breakfast, and the anger of his master, rather than break through a rule which his mother had assured him, if once infringed upon, might lead to other encroachments upon duty. On making his appearance amongst the boys, Elliott was asked in an authoritative tone, why he had not been ready to join them at the breakfast table.

For some time he hesitated, knowing that by attempting to justify himself by telling the whole truth, he should infallibly incur the ridicule of his companions; while his master, mistaking his hesitation for a wish to conceal some culpable transgression of the laws of the school, loudly and imperatively demanded where he had been.

"In the garden," replied Elliott.

"What were you doing there?" was the question that immediately followed.

Elliott was silent.

The question was repeated, louder and louder each time, until at last the master, irritated beyond his patience, seized the rebel by the arm, and shouted in his ear, " What were you doing in the garden ?"

Elliott, with a face all over crimson, replied in a voice almost as loud, " Since you must know, I was reading my bible."

" Hypocrite !" exclaimed the master, and thrust him away with a look of ineffable contempt.

Elliott looked him steadily in the face for one moment ; " It is the first time," said he, " that I have been called hypocrite, and by you it shall be the last."

As he said this, he drew the bible from his bosom, and, without a moment's hesitation, hurled it at the master's head.

He was so near and so determined, that he could not well have missed his aim ; and if the bursting of the goodly binding, and the

scattering of the gilded leaves, were any proof of the density of the material with which they came in contact, there is some reason to suspect that the master of that seminary was not exactly qualified for his important office.

This circumstance, of which Elliott was much too fond of boasting, and which, when Catherine first heard of it, inspired her with an irresistible propensity to laugh, occasioned their mother many sad and serious thoughts; and now, as she pondered on the past and the present, it was with a strict examination of her own motives, and with repeated endeavours to find out whether she had acted wisely in sending her son away from the comparatively safe shelter of her own roof, and committing him to the dubious companionship of the various characters usually met with in a public school. Her sorrowful reflection, on retiring to rest was, that we are creatures of such limited perceptions, we know not what we do, and sometimes when we would guide

the wandering, we only lead them into a more dangerous way. But even these reflections were not able to weigh down a mind like hers, supported as it was by the firm belief, that man is only required to act upon his own convictions of right and wrong; and that, if beyond the sphere of his limited vision, there are snares and pitfalls spread for the feet of the unwary, the issue, both to him and them, is in the hands of one who "willeth not the death of the sinner," and who, if it were consistent with his own wise and merciful designs, could remove every temptation from the pilgrim's path.

In vain did the anxious mother now look for the expected tidings. They came not, and the time of her son's anticipated return drew near.

At last a letter arrived with Elliott's seal, and quickly did she recognise the well-known hand; but while her heart beat violently, her cheek grew pale as she read.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Catherine.

"Nothing," replied her mother, calmly, "only Elliott is not coming home; he is going with a son of Lord Dacre's to his father's seat, in Bedfordshire; but you may read the letter, it will not take you long."

Catherine with difficulty yielded to the evidence of her own senses: for though the letter was written by her brother, it barely extended through the first page, and scarcely contained one word of genuine kindness. Unable to believe that this was all, she turned over the leaf. There were a few words on the opposite side, as if an after-thought had struck the writer, but they were scored through; while all the satisfaction they afforded was to see that the expression "dear mother" was amongst them.

And those who know what it is to love intensely, will believe that there was satisfaction even in this: for out of what materials may not a woman's love, and especially that of a mother, find sustenance? Other loves may pine away

upon the sterile wilderness of life, where there are no flowers to cull, no fruit to gather, and no harvest to be reaped; but the love of a mother can subsist upon the bitter roots of unkindness and neglect, and maintain its freshness and its vigour by drinking of the waters of affliction.

CHAPTER VIII.

Whilst Mary Grey remained beneath the roof of her hospitable friend, time flew on with rapid wing, not laden as it had hitherto been with cares and trials, but bringing along with each day a renewal of heartfelt enjoyment. Nor was his speedier flight unmarked by those deep impressions arising out of a serious examination of the purest sentiments, united with the faithful and unremitting performance of moral and religious duty.

The Greys had been accustomed to consider religion as a high and holy shrine only to be approached occasionally, and for the purpose

of offering up all their natural enjoyments; rather than as a household deity, whose presence was to sanctify their social meetings, to soothe their solitude, and support them under the burden of affliction—to bless their going forth, and to hallow their return—to stamp the character of truth upon their worldly transactions, and to infuse into their private feelings the sanctity of peace and love.

Such were the views of Mrs. Lee on this important subject, that the religious discipline of her household was rather felt than seen. Her religious duties were not such as constituted a distinct and separate part of her existence; but so blended with the familiar avocations of each day, as scarcely to be held more sacred, to be more zealously performed, or more scrupulously watched over, than the choice of her friends, the regulation of her habits, or the conversation of her social hours. Thus, while she permitted none of the more conspicuous offices of piety to be ne-

glected, she rendered her own society both interesting and highly improving, by the constant reference of her thoughts, even on ordinary occasions, to the two distinct principles of good and evil; to the merciful Providence by which our lives are governed; and to the wisdom, the power, and the glory of an almighty Father, and founder of the universe.

And Mary listened to her words, and marked her conduct with the deep interest of one who studies for the first time the holy truths imprinted in the book of life, little dreaming that the time would come, when the barren wastes before her, the thorns upon her path, and the storms to be encountered on her way, would make her look back with gratitude, and bless the solemn lessons she was now learning, unconscious of their after utility, or their intrinsic worth.

We have sufficient evidence that even those who are most solicitous to maintain an upright

walk in the path of duty, are not permitted to pursue their earthly course in uninterrupted joy. The uniform comfort of his mother's fireside was robbed of its felicity, by the unnatural and still mysterious conduct of Elliott Lee, who came not at the earnest solicitations of his family, nor wrote more kindly to them, or with more openness of himself, though he knew that the happiness of a parent must be sacrificed by his unwonted reserve. One letter alone, evidently written under a degree of mental depression, wore something of the character of his former self. In this he entreated his mother never again to press the subject of his return home. "I distress you by my absence," said he, "but I should distress you still more were I to come back to the home I am no longer capable of enjoying. The habits of openness and candour in which we were educated, can only give pleasure where there are none but venial errors to expose. When the heart is changed,

there can be little benefit in describing how that change has been effected. Suffice it, then, for you my mother—for Catherine, and Herbert, to know, that I am not what I was. I have other objects in pursuit, and different pleasures from those which fill your happy thoughts. In another month I go to college. In another year I shall be of age. It will then be in my power to assist you in any pecuniary way, and would to Heaven that, by scattering gold beneath your feet, I could heal the wounds I have inflicted on your peace."

Mrs. Lee felt, on reading this letter, that all hope was indeed over for the present, that she had lost her influence over her son, and that his prolonged absence would effectually loosen the ties of natural affection which she still believed he had not entirely shaken off. The feminine impulse to seek him, wherever he might be, and ascertain what would be the effect of a personal interview, often agitated her mind; but she was held back by

the recollection of his pride, his peculiar temper, and the indignant spirit with which he had ever been accustomed to repel what he considered as unwarrantable interference; and when she replied to his letter, it was with her wonted expressions of interest and affection, accompanied by that half-suppressed anguish, which goes farther than the bitterest reproaches towards touching the mind where every noble and generous feeling is not effaced.

Mary Grey entered deeply and feelingly into the anxieties of the family with whom she was so intimately associated; but much as she desired to make what return she could for their unremitting kindness to herself and Ellen, by devoting to their hour of need all the support and consolation it was in her power to offer, there were lingering thoughts of home that hung about her heart, and made her welcome her father's letters with a more lively interest than such dry and business-like

compositions as Stephen Grey's are wont to produce.

It was a short time before the stipulated twelve months of absence had expired, that Mary received from her father a melancholy account of the failing health of their neighbour at the Abbey; towards whom, now that the dangerous intercourse between the younger branches of the two families was cut off, Stephen Grey seemed to entertain more placable and kindly feelings.

His next letter astonished Mary by informing her, that Mr. Malone had consulted him on the subject of becoming his executor.

"At the request of this individual," said he, "I waited upon him at his own house, and a miserable Babel it is. I found him much altered, suffering rather sharply, and as appeared during my stay, more patiently than might have been expected from him. When he entered into the state of his pecuniary affairs, I was not surprised at the application

it had been his purpose to make to me; for truly an experienced mind, a wise head, and sound judgment, will be needed to set all right. You know that I never approved of this person's domestic character; but it can injure no man to do a kind office for the dead, and it is possible that my influence may be very beneficial when extended to the young people, who seem to have fallen into their present state, more through over indulgence, and the constant pursuit of pleasure instead of business, than from naturally vicious dispositions. Of course my remarks refer to the boy. Of his sister I know nothing, but if one may judge by the expense lavished upon her education, I should suppose her to be equally worthless with him.

"With respect to my own affairs, you are aware that I still occupy my house in the country, in consequence of not being able to meet with a tenant, whose views as to rent, and terms of occupation, were at all reason-

able; but by dismissing two of my servants, and adopting a stricter mode of economy in my way of living, I may hope to meet the great expenses of the present year; notwithstanding some deficiency in my accounts at the office, which have given occasion for very unpleasant suspicions to be laid at the door of my youngest clerk. Indeed, so strong was the presumptive evidence against him, that he has been dismissed from his place, although for the sake of his parents, the real cause is not made public. In his stead I propose taking my son Allan, who returns from school on the fifteenth of this month. I have not given him his choice, as I did my other sons, for three weighty reasons—first, because I wish him to feel that there is a marked difference between his conduct and theirs (at least that of his oldest brother); secondly, because I do not consider him competent to judge for himself in an affair of such moment; and thirdly, because there appears to be a per-

verseness in his nature, which I believe nothing but my own personal authority can subdue."

"Poor Allan," said Mary, as she folded up the letter. "Never was a temper more docile, a spirit more gentle, than yours, if you had but been treated with kindness and discretion; and now he whose mind is peculiarly formed for the higher and freer walks of intellect, must be forced down by compulsion into a situation he can neither enjoy nor do credit to, if he would. Oh my father! if you did but know the real character of those you have to deal with, how much good instead of evil you might do, and what a world of misery you might spare them!"

The next letter Mary received, was from this favourite brother. In six long pages, he told her all her heart was thirsting to know; but it left a melancholy impression, that some for whom she was deeply interested, were neither so well, nor so happy, as she could

have wished. The least satisfactory part of the letter related to her brother George. In Allan's description of his journey home, "we stopped half an hour," said he, "at the town of ———, where a cattle fair was held that day. With the other passengers I was dining in a room, separated only by a narrow passage from one where a number of farmers and cattle-dealers were regaling themselves with pipes, and equally odoriferous potations. Amongst their disputes, their oaths, and their vociferous exclamations, I recognised the voice of my brother George, and immediately looking in at the open door, discovered through the dense clouds of smoke, a stout, bloated-looking young man, leaning his back against the wall, and challenging one of the company to fight. As he spoke in the broad dialect of the country, and was dressed in the short green riding coat by which swaggering young fellows of this description are distinguished, I had some difficulty in persuading

myself that this was really my brother; but as soon as his eye met mine, I was convinced. He did not know me at first, for his vision was a little distorted, and when he did, his recognition was attended with no signs of pleasure. In short, after exchanging a few words, he skulked away into the stable-yard, to look after what he called his 'nag.'

"This circumstance, I confess, cast a gloom over my spirits for the rest of the journey, which I was unable to throw off; for you know, Mary, what belongs to the sort of life my brother is leading, and that he has little in his own nature, or in his own attainments, to raise him above the society by which he is now surrounded.

"Throughout the remainder of the day, my mind was so much occupied with these sad thoughts, that I had not prepared myself for finding Welbourne House exactly in its present state. To you I need not describe the melancholy of returning home without one

kind look to welcome our approach, or one fond heart to beat more cheerfully for our presence. Yet let me not forget poor Terence. He was overjoyed to meet me, and I, too, was delighted to find that I might once more enter the Abbey gates, without treading on forbidden ground. My delight, however, was considerably damped on finding our kind-hearted old friend so much an invalid, and suffering from a malady which he knows must bring him speedily to the grave. That house too, Mary, with its crumbling walls, and long passages, and vacant rooms, while it echoed with our laughter, was a perfect paradise, but it is not the house for sickness; and with only Terence and his father, the one in sorrow, the other in pain, the gloom which surrounds them is almost insupportable. Do not, however, suppose that I seek their society the less for the melancholy feelings it calls forth. I think they are both dearer to me now, than in their brightest, happiest hours. Indeed, my friend never ap-

peared to such advantage, as since he has had his father to support and cheer; and the old gentleman still shows his wonted consideration for others, by suppressing every complaint, and conversing cheerfully, even while evidently suffering the severest pain. You will judge of the extent to which this mistaken consideration is carried, when I tell you that he will not allow his daughter to be informed of his real situation. 'Let her be happy while she can,' is the reply he always makes, when Terence entreats him to permit her to be sent for, and represents the need he has of a kinder and gentler nurse than himself.

"'That can never be,' said he most feelingly, the last time the subject was pressed upon him. 'Wait but one week longer, and then perhaps I may feel differently. A week of happiness is something in this world, Terence.'

"I could not help regretting the mistaken view the poor man was taking of happiness; and I asked him if he did not think a dutiful

and affectionate daughter would be happier in the sick chamber of her father, than she could be in the midst of lighter pleasures, which centred only in herself?

"'My young friend,' said he, smiling, 'you are a poet, and this is all very fine for you to write about; but I have always thought that we men make rather too large a demand upon the virtues of the other sex, and I long since determined that no woman should be rendered more patient, more suffering, or more assiduous in her kindness, from what I might require of her.'

"So you see, Mary, if all men were as disinterested as our friend, you would want exercise for half your virtues; and since there is no way for excellence to shine forth in its genuine lustre without being put to the test, you ought to thank us for the selfishness and the caprices that make you what you are."

Allan's next letter to his sister referred more to his own situation, the difficulties of

which he had not experienced in their full force when he first wrote. He had now entered upon the office assigned to him by the will of his father, as entirely devoid of every qualification for filling it successfully, as if he had not possessed the rational faculties of a man; for of what value are any faculties, without either the power or the inclination to use them?

"Mary," said he, in writing to his sister, "I have taken my new station with the full confidence that I shall not occupy it long, for to me it is a living death. Yet here I see other men grow fat and flourish, while they inhale the smell of musty paper, as if it were the scent of violets borne upon the fresh pure gales of spring. I see them open the mighty ledger as if they unfolded the sibylline leaves, finding for every hour of their existence a new and invigorating truth; and grasp with eagerness the filthy gold for which they sacrifice the freedom, and the highest attributes of

intellectual being. The secret of human happiness is to be in one's proper place, and these men are in their's; but where, my sister —where under this blessed sun, would you appoint me mine?

"I will not be so blasphemous as to suppose that an immortal being was ever subjected to the ills of life, without a purpose in his existence; but if such a defect in creation were possible, I should say that I was the man. My father is dissatisfied with me already. I knew how it would be, and having never by my best endeavours been fortunate enough to please him, I fear I do not exhibit much alacrity in complying with his wishes. Still I do obey him, and if he would but give me a kind word now and then—if he would but give me credit for not being altogether a base unprincipled wretch—in short, if he would but understand me, I believe he might make a man of me yet—whether he could ever make me a wealthy man is very doubtful.

"Do you know, I believe my father actually suspects my honesty. He gave me a sharp scrutinizing look last night as he pressed me with some pointed questions, the drift of which I did not fully understand at the time; but his manner made it too evident to me upon reflection, that he must have suspected me of concealment and fraud. Well, I suppose I must bear even this, for I feel that my lot in life will be one of unmitigated bitterness; but if I were permitted to choose what to me would be the greatest earthly blessing, it would be to live with those who could understand me."

The next letter from Allan was in the same hopeless strain, accompanied with a still deeper shade of melancholy; but the last detached sentence proved, that though the energies of the writer might sometimes be dormant, they were not yet extinguished, or subdued.

"I am writing in my own chamber," said

he, "and listening for the carriage that is to bring Cathleen to her dying father. The night is dark and cloudy, and when I look out I see nothing but that one faint speck of distant light which marks the sick man's chamber. I moralize upon it, and think when that light is extinguished, where will be—I hear the carriage wheels—the Abbey gates are closed—Cathleen has come!"

"Foolish boy!" said Mary, as she read the closing sentence, "what have you to do with Cathleen? Have you not sorrow and trouble enough, without fancying you must love one of that luckless family?"

This letter was soon followed by another from the same hand. It began abruptly—"Mary, I have seen Cathleen, but how shall I describe her? What pencil can convey a just idea of a being too spiritual to be defined by outline, too pure for colours to pourtray. I have beheld her seated by her father's bed, like Egeria by the couch of death. She has

the azure eyes and ruby lips so peculiar to her country; and while I gaze upon her, I am struck with the recollection of a picture I have somewhere seen, of a holy child, with calm thoughtful brow, and innocent smile, by which the painter designed to represent religion. The child was seated amongst purple clouds, and seemed to be gazing through rays of glory, up to the great Fountain of eternal life; but its locks were not so golden, nor its eyes so heavenly blue as Cathleen's. Still you must hear her speak to be fully sensible of the charm of her presence.

"And this reminds me that the object of my writing was to call you home. My father wishes you to come as quickly as you conveniently can, to perform the christian duty of comforting the mourners at the Abbey, whose melancholy task, in all human probability, will soon be to close the eyes of their father. They are both young, and wholly unsupported except by the stimulus which will then have

ceased. Come then, dear Mary, as quickly as you can, for my sake and theirs. It is wonderful how much my father has interested himself in the afflictions of this family. If I could forget his conduct in his own, I should think he was a man of at least common feeling. But experience is more powerful than observation, and mine teaches me, that whatever his feeling may be for others, he possesses none for me. He desires me to add his thanks to Mrs. Lee for her continued kindness, and his cheerful acquiescence with her proposal that Ellen should be left behind, to pursue her studies more regularly than she would do at home. I hear so much of Ellen's beauty, that I long to see her; yet quite agree with my father that she is better with your excellent friend than with us, for Welbourne House is still shadowed with the cloud which imparted an unnatural gloom to the atmosphere of our infancy—which hangs around my steps wherever I go, and threatens to pursue me to the grave.

"But come, dear Mary, you are more necessary to my existence than ever. As the wearisome hours of life pass on, they are marked by others with enjoyments that repay them for the misery of living; by me with nothing but aspiring hopes that find no definite aim, and thus fall back upon my heart like the withering ashes of the volcano,—by visions of bright and glorious things that never were, and never can be realized in such a world as this,—by burning thoughts that find no voice, and thus consume my being.

"The light is just beginning to gleam from the window of the Abbey. Our friend still lives. Sometimes I fancy the light is obscured for a moment, and then I think that Cathleen passes to and fro. Fool! what is it to me, if Cathleen should pass away for ever? Come, Mary, and if you cannot make me happier or better, try, at least, to make me wiser than I am."

Although it is more than probable that the light in the Abbey window was solely indebted

to the imagination of Allan Grey for any peculiarity in its appearance on the evening when he wrote to his sister, yet that evening was unquestionably fraught with events of sad and solemn reality to the afflicted inhabitants of the sick chamber: for it was the scene of the last earthly suffering of a kind and generous parent; and when his fond farewell died away with the last struggle of expiring nature, his bereaved and desolate children drew closer together, as if through the wide world they now knew neither stay nor consolation but in each other's love.

They were, indeed, peculiarly destitute. Family differences, which ought long since to have been swept away by the natural course of time, had separated them from most of their near kindred; while pecuniary troubles, in which their lost parent was more deeply involved than he ever permitted them to suppose, had rendered him negligent of former friendships which he felt no longer capable of meeting

upon equal ground; and, at the same time, little solicitous of entering into new ones, except in the instance of the Greys, whose society he had sought solely for the sake of his children, and because it could be maintained without interference with his domestic habits.

That Mr. Malone had been imprudent in the extreme, there needed nothing more than the education of his son to prove. Born to little more than the inheritance of a lawsuit, upon which property of considerable extent was pending, Terence had received every qualification it was in his father's power to impart, for making him a gentleman, and wanted nothing but the means; which he was assured would be ample, and fully established as his own, when certain signatures should have been affixed to certain deeds, when different and mysterious forms of law should been gone through, and when the lawyers, to whom the important case had been committed, should have fully remunerated themselves for the time and attention of years.

With these expectations, and an inborn desire to escape from present annoyance, strengthened into habit by the blind indulgence of his father, Terence was as ill fitted for the active and useful occupations of a man of business, as he was ill supported in the dubious capacity of a gentleman. But his character was one not to be awakened to any serious apprehension of future evil, even by the sad aspect of the situation in which, at the death of his father, he knew himself to be involved. The sense of present calamity was all that weighed upon his buoyant spirit; and when he saw the sister whom he idolized, sinking under the pressure of affliction, his heart was occupied with a sympathy so intense, as to leave neither thought nor feeling for other and less interesting causes of anxiety.

"When will Mary return?" was the question he asked of Allan every time they met: for he, like her own family, had learned to expect from her care and kindness all the support and con-

solation their urgent wants required. Even Cathleen, partaking of the general sentiment, associated with the ideal character of Mary, the protection and the tenderness of a long-tried friend.

At last she came. The tidings of Mr. Malone's death had hastened her return, but it was not until the evening after the funeral, that she reached her home; and the degree of unreserved intercourse between the families at the Hall and the Abbey, to which sickness and sorrow had lent their sanction, induced Mary to lose no time in proving to the mourners how entirely she participated in their distress.

No kindred, no friends, except Stephen Grey and his son Allan, had graced the obsequies of him who had once been the idol of a brilliant circle—who had once been looked upon as the moving spring in the world of wit and gallantry in which he lived. The doors of the old mansion were open as usual, but the halls were vacant; and all the outward vestige that re-

mained of any important or extraordinary occasion, was the traces of the wheels of the hearse on the green turf of the court-yard.

In a wide chamber, dimly lighted, Mary found the brother and sister, with no companionship but their sorrow, and no occupation but that of silently recalling instances of long-cherished affection, and weeping its irreparable loss.

Terence advanced to meet the friend whose presence realized his only remaining hope, with a burst of tears that bespoke the impetuosity of his grief; while Cathleen, whose delicate frame had been exhausted by long vigils and unremitting attention to her suffering parent, remained almost motionless in the same chair he used to occupy, looking as if she had no other business in this world but to walk in her father's footsteps to the grave.

Mary embraced her with the love of a sister, and Cathleen's soul was one to be penetrated in a moment by the slightest proof of tender-

ness from those she regarded with esteem. With this embrace, sanctifying the hour of desolation, the indissoluble bond of their friendship was sealed; and henceforward, Mary went and came like a ministering angel, bringing consolation to the mourners, and taking away with her, after each interview, renewed desires to devote herself, with constancy and zeal, to their happiness and their welfare, now and for ever.

CHAPTER IX.

In the mean time Allan went each morning with his father, silent and spiritless, to pursue his task of duty—to transcribe, and ponder over words and figures that to him were no signs of ideas, to wander in imagination through regions of Arcadian bliss, or to lose himself in the mazy labyrinths of sentimental musing; while his vacant eye glanced listlessly over the page upon which it was his business to calculate and note down the pecuniary gains and losses of sordid speculation, coarse traffic, or vulgar toil. In vain did the authoritative voice of his father call him to attention. In vain did the exasperated and contemptuous

clerks pronounce him incapable of bookkeeping. Stephen Grey still believing that young men could be compelled to do as their superiors commanded, worked upon him with the tremendous engine of his wrath. The busy clerks and curious tradespeople looked askance at the fair countenance and graceful form of their young companion, as he took his place amongst them, and shook their sagacious heads in testimony of their conviction of the utter worthlessness of such items in the sum total of mankind; and those who had long been the pillars of his father's commercial dignity, prophesied darkly and ominously of the downward fortunes of the son. And all the while the heedless youth was dreaming on, instead of fulfilling the plain practical duties of the day; when he ought to have turned a sharp and curious ear to the clink of his father's cash, listening to the sound of ideal voices, to the melody of unseen waterfalls, or to the song of birds with golden wings; and when he

ought to have been balancing accounts, and calculating prices, comparing the shining locks of Cathleen that fell over her fair temples and her neck, to sunbeams resting upon a snow clad mountain, when morning first dawns upon its pure and trackless wastes.

It is not in nature for thoughts and feelings such as filled the soul of Allan Grey to exist without a language and a voice. To such impassioned and imaginative minds, poetry is the only medium through which they can hold spiritual converse with the ideal beings of their own creation, who people and animate the mysterious world in which they live. Allan committed himself in verse, and left the written record of his folly amongst other papers upon the official desk. There needed but this one act of enormity to stamp his character with the stigma of irremediable disgrace. A distant relative, whose interest it was to keep Allan from promotion in his father's business, discovered the ill-fated lines, and presented them to Stephen Grey.

The consternation of the farmer whose well stocked barns are threatened by a few dark words of combustible import with the awful signature of "Swing," could not exceed that of the astonished father as he looked upon the lines—some long, some short—condemned by actual rhyme and metre, and set forth in the handwriting of his son. The words were these:

TO PEACE.

Oh! I am weary with the fruitless toil
That brings no recompense of joy to me;
For I am toss'd upon a stormy sea,
Where tempests rage, where angry billows boil,
Where the frail bark, their victim and their spoil,
Swift o'er the heaving surge no more can flee.
And still, sweet minister of rest, to thee
I call, and still my baffled hopes recoil.
Yet come, oh come, and fan me with thy wings
Into that sleep, whose troubled dreams are o'er.
Come, gentle Peace! Thine angel visitings
Like spring birds resting on a desert shore,
Soothe the lone heart with melody, that brings
Tidings of summer flowers, where flowers shall bloom no more.

Could any thing have been more at variance with common sense? — with common *prudence?*—would have been an observation more to the point; for the clerks exchanged knowing glances with each other, and the favourite drew closer to the side of his patron, as he perused the lines, one and all reading the sentence of poor Allan as it darkened into awful and legible characters on his father's face.

The eye of Stephen Grey was not diverted by any other object, until it had scanned the length and the depth of the poem, even to the long line with which the inexperienced writer believed that all sonnets ought to terminate. Here, however, it made a sudden transition to the countenance of the culprit, who, lost in one of his deep reveries, remained wholly unconscious of the net his evil genius had been weaving around him. But there was something in his father's eye, pale, and cold, and glassy as it was, that seemed to have the power of the basilisk, and Allan started, to feel it

fixed upon him with the ominous expression he had learned to regard as the unfailing harbinger of a storm.

"Are you the author of these lines?" asked Stephen Grey, with perfect composure.

"I am," replied Allan, blushing deeply, for he began to think it possible his father might have found some merit in them.

"Then I now know," continued Stephen Grey, holding up the badge of disgrace between his finger and thumb, as if it had been some delicate morsel for the palate of an epicure, "how it is that your time is wasted, and your small share of talent so grossly and so wantonly abused,—how it is also that my name and my house are disgraced with a worthless and inefficient member. Here, Gibbins, take this precious specimen of my son's abilities, and show it round the office to all the clerks."

Gibbins was delighted, and went, with step alert, broad smile, and head thrown back,

to the first—the second—and so on to all the junior members of the establishment, and Allan listened to the suppressed laughter of those who implicitly believed the lines to be ridiculous, because they were unable to understand them. But while his very soul revolted from the insult so publicly and unfeelingly offered by his father, he maintained a calm, unaltered countenance, determined that his own consciousness of degradation should afford no additional cause of triumph.

In this manner, Stephen Grey deemed it politic to wound and irritate a mind peculiarly susceptible of pain, unconscious that by applying such violent means to root out what he called "unpardonable folly," he was necessarily sowing the fatal seeds of filial distrust and dislike; and it is possible that this system diligently pursued, might, at last, have induced the young poet to sacrifice his muse for the sake of obtaining the peace for which he pined, but that the evening of each day

brought with it fresh stimulus to his muse,—fresh inspiration to his lyre.

Like some of the fabled victims of enchantment, compelled, for their daily punishment, to endure for a few hours the existence they most loathed, and then permitted to resume their own form and character, until the return of the hated moment of transformation; Allan Grey no sooner beheld, on returning home, the dim light from the single window of the Abbey, and the rugged outline of its distant walls, than he was once more himself,—free to live and move in the world he loved, and to claim kindred with congenial minds.

Terence Malone had so little of what was melancholy or romantic in his nature, that he had never been able to go along with Allan in his poetic flights, but Cathleen's was a sister spirit. More highly, or rather, more delicately cultivated than her brother, she was able to comprehend and appreciate the mental exaltation of his friend, and could not

only penetrate with him into the minute and hidden sources of actual pain and pleasure, but soar as well into the regions of imagination, where he had hitherto maintained an isolated, yet charmed existence.

Perhaps there never was a mortal being of high intellectual capabilities, who did not experience an insatiable thirst for something it believed itself born to attain, or to pursue. If such extraordinary capability be purely intellectual, the thirst of the soul can only be allayed by the investigation of truth, under whatever form it may be concealed, or in whatever character it may be embodied. But if the capability be one of feeling, rather than of understanding, the mind thus animated will spend its energies in search of sympathy, and wherever it finds it, will strike root and live, though the soil should be sterile as the desert sands, and the atmosphere around one universal blight, with neither rain nor dew to invigorate its growth.

Such was the character of Allan Grey, though he knew not till be found a mind similarly constituted with his own, for what he had been searching through the realms of nature and of art in vain. His sister Mary had been, and still was, the comfort of his life; but she neither saw the world as he did, nor reaped from the tree of knowledge the same fruit. His griefs he had always been accustomed to share with her; but even his circumscribed and isolated existence had afforded some intense enjoyments which he had hitherto longed in vain to find a friend who was capable of participating. Now he was lonely no more. Nature, poetry, and music, spoke in the same voice to Cathleen, as to him. Like two wandering spirits who had long sought kindred fellowship, they found their home in each other's hearts; and young, ardent, and susceptible, learned too soon to double the importance of every enjoyment which they shared together.

With minds less calculated for the imaginary than the real, Mary and Terence watched the growing intimacy of the two friends, sometimes smiling, and sometimes looking with serious disapprobation upon their ardent and romantic attachment. Perhaps it would have been wiser for them, had they remembered that there are other kinds of sympathy than that which belongs exclusively to poetry. But their experience was of that time of life alone, when we are too much occupied by feeling, to examine the nature of our sensations; and while every returning day brought them the happiness of each other's society, the free interchange of mutual thought, and the confidential communion which a slight acquaintance with sorrow, and an ardent wish to console, produces in generous minds, they were too well satisfied with themselves and their present situation, to look with anxious inquiry into the future.

Nor was it a slight degree of internal satis-

faction that was needed to support Mary under the trials of the present hour, of which she had as usual more than her proper share. Cathleen was fast losing the look of rosy health with which she first met the eye of her young admirer. Her step had lately become languid, and the burning blush which on the slightest emotion mounted to her cheek, was immediately followed by an unnatural and almost deadly paleness.

When Mary first mentioned her fears to Terence, he laughed, and said his sister owed her varying colour to the fluttering wings of Cupid; but more serious observation convinced him that there was indeed a deeper cause for anxiety than the uncertain throbbing of a love-lorn maiden's pulse.

Cathleen herself, however, seemed wholly unconscious of any important change. She made no complaint, but continued to exert herself, even more than was consistent with her safety; and seldom suffered Allan to leave

her, without having indulged him with some of the sweetest melodies of her native country, which she played and sung with peculiar taste and feeling.

There is something so deeply affecting in these struggles of a young and buoyant spirit against the encroachments of disease, as of itself to attract and interest the mere observer; but when beauty is threatened with decay—when the pure bright eyes of innocence and love look the destroyer in the face, with perfect unconsciousness of his fatal design, we naturally cling to the supposed victim as if we could ward off the blow; and cherish its loveliness, and dote upon its perfections, as if the might of human affection could shelter the fair flowers of earth, and protect them from the blight of death.

There needed not this additional bond of interest to make the love of Allan Grey more constant, nor this fiery ordeal to render it more pure. He, too, had watched the chang-

ing colour on the cheek of Cathleen. He had marked her languid eye, and observed her feeble step; but he shrunk from making them the subject of conversation, even with his sister; and when she first began to remark upon it in his presence, he bit his lip, and turned away in silence: so much do we desire to shun the voice that speaks but to confirm our fears.

Nor was the situation of Cathleen all that troubled Mary's peace of mind. Her father's house was a scene of constant misunderstanding, and of frequent dissatisfaction and gloom. The intimacy with Terence and his sister had been permitted from a sense of duty; but Stephen Grey possessed not the Christian grace which converts an act of duty into a pleasure. While Terence Malone was overwhelmed with trouble, he could pity and forgive his faults; but having made an unsuccessful proposal to him, of taking a place in his office, and having since then seen him

recover his wonted cheerfulness and vivacity, it was extremely difficult to regard his imprudence and inconsistency even with toleration; nor was it, on the other hand, an easy task for Terence to accommodate himself to the stern solemnity of the man whom it was his interest as well as his desire, to conciliate. His natural love of laughter was perpetually bursting forth on the most inappropriate occasions; and while Allan and Cathleen too often yielded to the infection, Mary was left to struggle alike with her own inclination, and with her father's strong aversion to such unauthorized and unbecoming conduct. In vain did Mary watch the latent mischief lurking in the eye of Terence, with a view to extinguish the embers ere they produced an explosion. Terence was one who would rather lose his dinner than his jest, and all that was left for Mary was, to divert her father's attention, by endeavouring to converse with him on other subjects, and in private defending the culprits

with a zeal that not unfrequently drew down extreme displeasure upon herself.

These private interviews were of such a nature, as would have broken the spirit, and quenched the enthusiasm of almost any other woman ; but, beneath a calm and humble exterior, Mary Grey possessed a firmness of which she was little suspected, and a pertinacity in serving her friends, which no consequences it brought upon herself were powerful enough to subdue, or even to restrain.

It was when alone with Mary, that Stephen Grey now vented his accumulating indignation against Terence and Allan, with his contempt for poor Cathleen, deeming them unworthy to hear it delivered from his own lips ; and when he had sentenced the brother and sister to their just portion of beggary and degradation, he used to wind up his animadversions upon Allan, by accusing him of idleness, and, as a necessary consequence in his opinion, of every vice.

"You forget," Mary would sometimes say, when her courage was wrought up to the highest pitch, "that poor Allan never had the choice of occupation with which his brothers were indulged. In some other situation it is probable he would exert himself more."

"In a playhouse," replied her father, "I have little doubt but he would. Say no more on his behalf. You do not know him so well as I do. It is not likely that you should; for I watch him day by day, and see that he is utterly regardless of his best interests—indolent, worthless, and unprincipled."

"No, no," exclaimed Mary with warmth, "you must not say that of Allan. Like us all, he has his faults; but there is a wide difference between such faults as his, and actual vices."

"I know of no greater vice than idleness," resumed her father. And here the disputed point used generally to rest; for, upon the principle that inattention to one particular

line of business must arise from natural and incorrigible idleness, and that such idleness is necessarily connected with the willing performance of every dishonest and despicable action, it was not easy to defend Allan Grey, even from the frequently implied suspicion, that his father's money was not safe in passing through his hands.

Stephen Grey was, in reality, incapable of understanding any kind of virtue but what belonged to the maintenance of an unsullied name as an upright tradesman, and a useful neighbour. Of the merits of heroic suffering, of self devotion, or self sacrifice, he knew nothing. If ever he heard such things spoken of, he thought them all romance and unintelligible jargon; and few persons were either so imprudent, or so lavish of their speech, as to waste such words upon his ear.

The unfortunate sonnet left by Allan Grey upon his desk, was not the only proof of his incompetency to act the part of an honest and

useful member of society. He had been so much delighted with the beautiful Irish ballad of "Kathleen O'More," that she whose name had its due weight in adding to the fascination of the lines, and whose voice lent a tenfold charm to the music, could not refuse to copy the notes and the words for him with her own hand; and Allan, either believing himself not quite perfect in both, or finding some other reason as efficient for their not being long absent from his sight, took the fair page along with him to town, and bestowed upon it many a stolen glance, when his thoughts ought to have been elsewhere.

An unwonted press of business that day created more than usual bustle and confusion in the office. Desks were rifled, drawers ransacked, and papers shuffled to and fro; and thus an opportunity was afforded for Gibbins, whose eager eye was watchful over Allan's movements, to discover his secret treasure, which he contrived with his meddling

fingers to lay open to the observation of his master, who at that moment was approaching.

Gentle reader, does thy recollection furnish thee with a single instance of a precious object falling under the inspection of merciless eyes, incapable of perceiving its merit, when those eyes have not rested exactly upon the part thou wouldest have wished to conceal from their observation?

The instance of Allan Grey was no exception to this rule. He watched his father reading (for on such occasions he was accustomed to read all) until he came to the milking of the "dun cow," that verse of dubious pathos, even when accompanied by the aid of music. Here Stephen Grey read aloud, slowly, and deliberately, but with monotonous and solemn intonation, remarking as he concluded, that it would be well if a Cathleen of their acquaintance would sometimes employ herself in milking a dun cow, as in all probability she would have to do worse than that, or starve.

It was comparatively easy to hear the contempt with which the lines were read, and afterwards to see them torn in pieces and cast into the fire; but this unfeeling remark upon one so gentle, and so much an object of tenderness and compassion, made an indelible impression upon a heart not addicted to vindictive reminiscences, and helped to extinguish the natural affection Allan had long been striving in vain to cherish for his father.

"Is this all you have brought for your private edification to-day?" asked Stephen Grey, when the last fragment of the song was consumed.

"You may search my papers," replied Allan, determined to make no resistance, and exhibit no symptoms of concealment.

His papers were accordingly examined by his father and Gibbins, nor was it long before the latter discovered a pencil sketch of a female head, which fortunately for the artist

was so little like the object it was intended to represent, as not to be recognised.

"This is too good for the flames," exclaimed Gibbins laughing.

"Place it above the fire," said his master, "that all the world may see what a hopeful son I am blessed with."

By such means he expected to make Allan ashamed of his own absurdity; but there is a kind of violence under which the gentlest disposition becomes firm; and so far from acknowledging his fault, Allan looked his father boldly in the face, and telling him it was the last time he should make his appearance in that office, deliberately took up his hat and walked home.

For the first mile he trod the ground as if he spurned its obduracy, and resisted its contamination. For the next he walked more warily, though still with haughty step; but the way seemed longer than he had calculated upon, and the unwonted excitement of the morning, being followed, as such emotions

usually are, by an almost insupportable depression, he sunk at last into the weariness of the humblest pilgrim; and by the time he reached the village of Welbourne, his knees were ready to smite against each other, and he felt as if reduced to a level with those homeless wanderers who ask the bread of charity, and seek the shelter of the poor-house.

On turning into the road leading directly to his father's house, and past that to the Abbey, he started at finding himself suddenly confronted by Terence Malone in earnest conversation with a gentleman on horseback, whom he immediately recognised as a physician from the neighbouring town; and had the apparition been that of death on the pale horse, he could scarcely have looked more aghast.

In order to spare his feelings, Terence had said nothing of his intention to call in the aid of medical advice, of which he expected to have the full benefit without the chance of detection, while his friend was away. Nor

was Terence himself looking more alive than Allan. Not that the doctor had said any thing of his sister's case to occasion immediate alarm, but by a few inadvertent words, he had that morning awakened him to a full and feeling sense of his own want of means to procure such indulgences as he would willingly have lavished upon Cathleen in the most extravagant profusion.

"Well, what does he say?" inquired Allan, determined to rush at once upon the worst, as soon as the doctor had wished them both good morning.

"He says—" replied Terence, and then he stood still, and leaned upon the arm of his friend, while a convulsion of pain passed over his usually happy countenance.

"Tell me all!" exclaimed Allan, fearing the worst for Cathleen. "Is the case so decided? Is there indeed no hope?"

"Oh yes," sighed Terence, "there is hope —no positive disease—only a tendency—"

"Thank God!" interrupted Allan; "but what can make you look so wretched, when she may yet be restored?"

Terence grasped his arm more firmly, held down his head, and trod with all his might upon a bunch of primroses growing by the way-side. At last he spoke.

"There is hope for Cathleen, Allan, if she can live in the south of France, or in Italy, or make a voyage up the Mediterranean."

"Not otherwise?"

Terence shook his head.

"Then surely you will go."

"Allan," said his friend, with a gasp of despair, "I never knew before, what people meant when they talked of the bitterness of poverty;—I have not the means!"

"You can sell the Abbey."

"No; it is not mine to sell. It is supposed to belong to the party with whom we are at law; and we only live in it by sufferance until the case shall be decided."

A long silence ensued, for the two friends were so devoted to the sufferer, and so enthusiastic in their devotion, that in imagining ways and means for her assistance, they scrupled not to dwell upon some that were neither justified by law nor reason, though they would have blushed to tell each other how far they had deviated from probability, and common sense. At last, Terence found language for a comparatively rational thought.

"I will write to these stupid lawyers," said he, "and tell them that an angel is perishing while they delay; and in the mean time, Allan, you must assist me, and with the little that I have, it is possible that something may be done."

"I?" said Allan, with a blank look of utter destitution, "I assist you? I have this very morning thrown away my only chance of ever being able even to provide my own bread. I can do nothing in conjunction with my father, and therefore I have resigned my place in his office."

"But you have talents."

"And so have you."

"I wonder what they are," said Terence, as the familiar smile once more stole over his countenance. "Here we stand upon the king's highway, two as competent young fellows as you can find out of Bedlam, willing to exchange our wits for ready money, they being all we possess, but, unfortunately, not knowing where to find customers for so valuable a commodity."

While his companion was speaking, Allan had fallen into one of his deep reveries. The word talent had put him upon thinking of his own capabilities; and ere he had reached his father's door, he had formed a scheme for bringing his talents into action.

CHAPTER X.

Had Allan Grey communicated to his father, or to the clerks in his father's office, the design his fertile imagination had given birth to, for maintaining himself and assisting his friends, they would unanimously have exchanged their sentence of fool for that of madman. Such as the design was, however, it filled the whole soul of the enthusiast, and enabled him to meet, without flinching, the stern eye of his father when he returned from town ; while Mary, who had no such absorbing speculations to occupy her thoughts, in trembling apprehension for the brother she loved, presented herself before her father, in order that she might receive the

first shock of his displeasure. Her fears, however, were for the present, groundless. No anger was expressed in words, for it was considered more consistent with the dignity of an insulted parent to treat the offender with silent contempt; and he was therefore permitted to eat at his father's table, and to sleep beneath his roof, without the slightest or most casual acknowledgment of his presence.

Perhaps no other line of conduct could have made the food and the shelter of which Allan now partook so hateful to him as this; and had the pecuniary means been at this time within his reach, it is more than probable he would have left his father's house for ever. But there was one method (and, perhaps, the only effectual one for enforcing the submission of grown-up children,) so rigorously adhered to by Stephen Grey, that the spirit of open rebellion was no sooner awakened under his dominion, than it died away for want of power and liberty to exert its strength. As his children advanced

in years, he could not awe them into obedience as he had done in their infancy; but as their wants increased, he could withhold the means of gratification, and, in some measure, subdue them to his will by depriving them of access to any possible resources.

How Allan's wounded spirit revolted from this peculiar kind of control, can only be fully understood by those, who after having resolved to escape from thraldom, have looked into an empty purse; who, while suspecting that they were grudged the very sustenance of life, have felt their incapability to purchase it elsewhere; and who, having dared to rebel against existing authority, have looked forward to a day when they should be under the necessity of asking pecuniary assistance from the same source.

If this situation will not bring down the independent spirit, what will?

Mary pleaded tenderly with her brother, and hinted, with extreme delicacy, at the expediency of yielding to his father's wishes; but as

the stimulus for action increased, Allan felt his powers of exertion and resistance increase in the same proportion; and though the plan he had formed for his own aggrandizement would have been looked upon by a worldly and experienced eye as altogether fallacious and chimerical, to that of the young poet it wore a totally different character, and had, besides, the strong recommendation of being the only scheme that lay within his reach to execute.

From his childhood Allan had practised the art of drawing with considerable taste and skill; but since his acquaintance with Cathleen, who, in addition to her natural talent, had enjoyed the advantage of the best instruction, he had improved so rapidly, as to aspire, without much presumption, to the merit of an artist. His likenesses were pronounced admirable, because they were generally known; and some of the dutiful sons and daughters in the village of Welbourne and the neighbourhood, had asked him, half in jest and half in earnest, to give

them sketches of their parents: for Allan was an universal favourite with old people; and many a shrivelled spinster would have cheerfully consented to sit, for the comely youth to pourtray her faded charms.

Amongst the rest, was a worthy family of the most respectable class of farmers, with whom Mary and Allan were in the habit of exchanging kind offices, and at whose hospitable house they spent, once or twice in the year, a pleasant social evening.

This family afforded Allan his first hope; but it was a hope he still cherished in secret, too well knowing that even his kindest judge, his sister Mary, would have condemned it as futile; while to have exposed it to Terence and his sister, would have been to strike a death blow at once to his resolution. Indeed, such were the habits and sentiments in which they had been educated, and such their total ignorance of the practical duties of life, that while they talked, in extravagant language, of what they would

do and suffer for the sake of obtaining money, their ideas were always of desperate sacrifices, producing the immediate reward of absolute wealth. Of the drudgery required to obtain the remuneration of shillings and pence, they knew no more than the monarch on his throne; and would probably have looked with the same wonder and contempt upon the process by which Allan proposed to supply his empty purse.

There is a zest imparted to our resolutions by secrecy as well as hope; and the young artist felt both in their full force as he traced the hedge-row path, leading by a circuitous course to the residence of farmer Wells.

The quacking of an innumerable multitude of ducks, and the discordant cackling of other poultry, announcing his approach, were sounds well calculated to rouse the poet to a sense of the reality of actual life; and as he strode along the dubious causeway which led by a wicket entrance into the orchard, pursued all

the way by the outstretched neck of an impertinent gander, it is more than probable that some painful apprehensions of things remote, as well as immediate, flitted across his mind. But of these the autobiography of Allan Grey bears no record, and we have no right to surmise.

Arrived at the wide hall door, he knocked loudly, but waited for a welcome before he ventured in; and who should appear to answer his summons, but Mrs. Wells herself—clad in holland apron, close cap, and russet gown, and evidently having just escaped from the laborious manufacture of her celebrated cheese.

Had Miss Wells, or Miss Lydia, given him the welcome, his resolution would have stood unshaken, for they read Lord Byron, sung Moore's Melodies, and understood a little of what belongs to the fine arts; but to talk to a bustling farmer's wife in the broad daylight of busy noon, about sitting for her likeness,

was an absurdity of which Allan, visionary as he was, felt himself wholly incapable; and asking for Miss Wells or her sister, he was ushered into a vacant parlour, where he waited until the young ladies had doffed their morning dresses, and pinned on the pink ribbons designed to impart an additional glow to their already blooming charms.

At last the two girls made their appearance, and Allan was unexpectedly betrayed into his wonted greeting of kindness and gallantry, when he ought to have commenced the business of the day exclusively as one who comes to take away with him an equivalent for the labour of his hands.

"I have come to take your likenesses," said he, with a look and manner that turned the whole affair into a jest. "Your mother's first, if you please, for you know she was so good as to say she would patronise me when I became a travelling artist."

The young ladies now tittered, and said Mr.

Allan was always so droll; but one of them ran to fetch her mother, and when, with much difficulty, they had been made to understand that the design of their visitor was serious, they all exclaimed how kind he was—how good to take that trouble—how delighted they should be to have all their portraits hung up, if only to surprise uncle Benjamin when he came to see them at Christmas.

Amidst the confusion of voices, one thing, however, was clearly intelligible—they had no idea—not the most distant, that Allan was expecting money for all his trouble, and the resolution he had brought with him proved far from sufficient for the necessary explanation.

"Well," thought he, as he took out his pencils, and began to operate upon the old lady, "these people have been very kind and neighbourly, and when poor Mr. Malone was ill, used to send every day, for his acceptance, some delicacy which their own hands had

made. If I succeed with them, they will spread my fame in the neighbourhood, and they are richly deserving of all the pains I can bestow upon them."

Still, had Allan known exactly how his first advances would be received, he would have limited his operations to the senior members of the family. But he had plunged in, not knowing upon what terms, and his kindness being accepted on the broadest scale, there was nothing for it but proceeding regularly downwards, from old Christopher Wells to his youngest son, taking in the nose and ears of the great shepherd's dog, without whom they did not consider their family complete.

This extensive performance necessarily occupied a good deal of time, but Allan was so accustomed to wander in the fields, to loiter at the Abbey, and to be, nobody but himself knew where, that little note was taken of his absence from home; and he had actually completed the whole series of portraits, with-

out the cause of that absence having been discovered.

Long before the finishing touch was given to the round bluff face of little Thomas Wells, Allan had discovered that the diligent labourer in this peculiar calling is richly worthy of his hire; and that, previous to his accepting the proposals of those who were so charmed with his pictures, as to wish to see their own faces depicted in the same style, it was highly necessary to rouse himself to explain upon what terms they could be gratified. Mrs. Wells was the individual he chose to communicate with on this important occasion, and he made his choice as we often do in circumstances of distressing delicacy, because she was the person least likely to feel exactly as he did on the subject; for there are cases when we are too proud to be condoled with, and reject all sympathy, from its very inadequacy to alleviate our sufferings.

"I am glad your friends think the portraits

like," said Allan to the good woman of the house, as he prepared to take his final leave.

"Like! They must be either blind or stupid to think otherwise," replied Mrs. Wells. "My only vexation is that you should have taken so much trouble about us, and our faces; but, as you say, practice makes perfect, and you may have been improving your hand upon us. Still, Mr. Allan, if there was any thing we could do in return—any thing in the world—"

"I will tell you, my good friend," replied Allan, "what you can do;" and then he blushed, and hesitated, until the simple-hearted woman began to think whether he had not cast a kindly eye upon one of her daughters. "I will tell you what you can do," continued Allan, beginning the sentence again, with more breath to utter it. "You can recommend me to your friends."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Wells, "I have done that already. There is Mr. Jackson, Mrs. Wilkinson, and the three Miss Millers, all wild to have their likenesses taken."

"But you must recommend me as an artist," said Allan.

"And that I am sure you are," continued the good woman, with the same density of understanding, and fluency of speech. "There's Mr. Mansfield, our vicar, has a great portrait hung in his dining-room which they tell me was done by an artist, and in London too; but to my taste, it is not half so beautiful, or so much like as yours."

"You do not quite understand me yet," said Allan again. "In plain words, Mrs. Wells, I am not living on very comfortable terms with my father, and I want to maintain myself by taking likenesses."

"No, no, Mr. Allan," said the lady, in an altered tone, and with a countenance that expressed her want of power to give credit to so great an improbability. "You don't mean what you say, Mr. Allan. You are imposing upon a simple woman. You will not—you cannot go about taking money of such people as these."

"I will," said Allan, "if you will speak a kind word for me, and explain my intentions without betraying any thing about my father."

As he said this, he held out his hand to take leave, but the melancholy fall of his voice, and the tears, which in spite of his resolution, rushed into his eyes, convinced, and affected his friend so deeply, that she had no language to express her sympathy and compassion; but stood holding his hand in hers, and wiping her eyes with her apron, until he made a second movement towards the door.

"Stay," said she, "you must not leave us yet. You have taken all our likenesses, but if I had had the least idea—"

"Say not a word about that," interrupted Allan,—"not a word I entreat you."

"But must you go about from house to house, my poor fellow?" said the kind-hearted woman.

"I must," replied Allan.

"Then come to us always in your way, and take a bed when it suits you. And stay; another word before you go. If things should grow worse between you and your father, and you should want a home for a few weeks or so, remember we are in your debt, Mr. Allan, and even if we were not, there's the white chamber always at liberty, and as my husband says, one guest the more at a farmer's table makes little difference."

Allan expressed the warmest gratitude for the well-meant kindness of his worthy friend, and after returning again to the painful part of the subject, belonging exclusively to pecuniary affairs, and settling how Mrs. Wells should introduce him to some of her friends, on the footing of an artist, he returned home, querying within himself, whether the difficulties of money-making in the line he had chosen, were not equal, at least, to those he had encountered in his father's office.

In setting forth with a clear understanding, however, his way became more easy, and after going through two or three families, and weighing in his purse the actual and substantial profits of his labour, he felt his prospects brighten so much upon him, that he was induced to impart the important secret of his success to his sister Mary, whom he commissioned to convey it to his friends at the Abbey.

Great was the wonder expressed by all at this unprecedented step of Allan's, but their wonder was unmixed with blame; and while they lamented the adverse circumstances which had consigned so bright a genius to such a fate, they fervently wished the young artist might be rewarded with success so brilliant as to lead him into a higher and more intellectual sphere of action.

Whatever we undertake of our own free will, unapproved, and unaided by others, we naturally pursue with firmness and avidity;

and Allan went diligently and cheerfully to his daily task, until a single luckless incident cast a damp upon his new-born energy.

The secret of his meeting with so much employment, consisted in the smallness of the sum demanded as the price of his pictures. These were consequently slight in themselves, and of such a nature as to be easily effaced.

It happened that Cathleen and her brother were visiting one day at a house where Allan had been employed, and when the ladies left the dinner table, and threw themselves upon the mistress of the mansion and her neatly-arranged drawing-room for all the entertainment they could afford, the likenesses were brought out, and exhibited for the amusement of that class of critics who always point immediately to the dark shadow below the nose, exclaiming that the original of the picture has no such mark as that upon his face.

Cathleen sat with heightened colour, listening to the stupid remarks of the company,

who fingered the chalk lines, and rolled and unrolled the paper, widening each time the various rents made in the edges, and thus helping to reduce the luckless specimens of art to a very degraded and forlorn condition.

"Such *things!*" said one young lady, yawning and throwing them contemptuously aside.

"I don't like the style—I never did," exclaimed another of higher pretensions.

"Pray how much might you give for them?" asked a third; while the lady of the house endeavoured to defend them by saying, they were once very much like; but that her own neck had been dusted away by the housemaid, and her naughty boy had rubbed off his father's nose; at which the company laughed long and loud, as they held up the damaged pictures the better to enjoy the joke.

What would Cathleen have given at that moment to have been able to snatch away the portraits unseen, and leaving the stated price behind her, to have turned her back upon that

house for ever! But fearing to commit herself by showing too deep an interest in the artist, she curbed her haughty spirit, and determined, if her persuasions had any power, that Allan should expose himself no more to the vulgar criticisms of such people.

Perhaps there never was a man of aspiring, yet delicate mind, who could deliberately persist in doing what the lady of his love considered as contemptible and degrading. If there were, Allan Grey was not this man. Cathleen had only to hint her objections to his occupation, and it was relinquished without one word of defence, or one expression of regret; for, rather than bring the faintest blush of shame upon her cheek, what would he not have sacrificed and suffered?

Had Cathleen been as ready with another plan of action, as she was with her objections to this, the service done to Allan would have been infinitely greater; but it seems to be the part of friendship merely to stop us in our

sanguine career, instead of pointing out a safer or more eligible course.

"You have other talents," argued the inexperienced girl, intent only upon escaping a repetition of her recent pain—"you have other talents capable of being exercised in a nobler sphere. Your poetry is beyond my praise. I never read the least fragment of yours without feeling that you were born to a glorious destiny, which nothing but your own blindness to your extraordinary capability can counteract."

And Allan, too deeply susceptible of praise from such a source, suffered the latent ambition thus kindled in his bosom to hurry him into a thousand delicious and bewildering visions of future fame—visions which, by holding them concealed within the sanctuary of his own heart, he had no opportunity of examining by a broad and certain light, or comparing with the actual experience of others.

Of all the diseases to which the human mind

is liable, a silent enthusiasm is the most incurable. Those visionaries who disclose the scheme of their own projected absurdities to others, however impetuous the current of their feelings may be, or however dense their own faculties of perception, are almost sure to find a check and a cure in the reception their confidence meets with from the world; but those who cherish their favourite designs in secret, seldom fail to carry them into execution, either for evil or for good.

And now Allan paced, with fresh delight, the romantic paths around his father's dwelling, and traced the verdant banks of a smooth river that glided past the Abbey, reflecting in its clear unruffled bosom the deep dark shadow of the ivied walls, and the light that glanced through the turret windows, and shot athwart the surrounding gloom. Upon this river, Terence kept a small pleasure boat, in which Allan used to sail listlessly with the stream, weaving such lays of love and sadness, as

could not, he thought, be cast upon the world in vain: for, when he repeated them to his sister Mary, and then, with gentler voice, to Cathleen, they used to listen with enraptured attention, while tears from the eyes he loved best, attested the pathos of his muse. Even Terence would keep silence during the recital, and all learned to look ardently forward to a time when their heartfelt admiration would be confirmed by the applause of the public.

In the mean time, Mary was making preparations for the return of both her sisters. Harriet, who, on leaving school, had gone to pay a visit to her aunt, living in a small county town, was become so great a favourite, as almost to be adopted as her own child, and, consequently, her return to her father's house was less as a resident than a guest; while Ellen, whose stay with Mrs. Lee had been prolonged from time to time, came at last, at the earnest entreaty of her sister Mary, to cheer the solitude of her home.

Christmas was the time of meeting, and Mary did her best to warm the cheerless hospitality of Welbourne House into something like comfort. "If my father would but go from home for one day," she thought, "how happy we might all be;" and her wishes were more than realized, for he went from home and was absent for two entire days and nights, on one of which Terence and his sister were to be guests at the Hall—on the other, the whole party were to assemble at the Abbey.

Harriet arrived some days before her sister, unchanged, except in manners and appearance. Still thoughtless, wild, extravagant, and sometimes pert, she had assumed, in exchanging her girlish frock for a fashionable dress, the ease and gaiety of a woman of the world; while her graceful form, light movements, and hearty, but still not vulgar laugh, bright eyes, and sunny hair, lent to her whole character a sort of fascination almost as powerful as that of beauty.

Free as Mary was, and ever had been, from the taint of selfishness or envy, she could not look upon her sister Harriet without an ideal connexion between her and Terence, accompanied with a flash of secret pain, for which she chid herself as often as it occurred.

They met like friends who have only been separated for a day. Their former familiarity and their old jests were renewed; and Mary, who was ignorant how seldom minds of this character are deeply interested in each other, began to think, that in cultivating the happiness of others, she must make a greater sacrifice than she had anticipated of her own. She was, however, entirely relieved from her secret apprehensions by finding, that while Terence always selected Harriet to dance with, and addressed his puns and witticisms to her ear, his serious attentions were directed to herself, with the same pointed delicacy and kindness as ever; and that while he exchanged with her sister the loud laugh and the quick repartee,

he spoke to her in those grave low tones, according best with the language of affection.

It was not until the eve of the first day of freedom and festivity, that Ellen Grey was expected. A deep snow lay on the ground, and though the wind blew sharply from the north, Mary threw open the window so often to listen to the sound of carriage wheels, that Terence, who was their guest that evening, begged she would allow her sister to approach without sacrificing their lives in honour of her arrival.

"She comes at last!" exclaimed Mary, with exultation, as the deep roll of a carriage was heard upon the bridge. "Terence, you must go with me to meet her," and she seized his reluctant arm; for the sharp frosty air, and the remembrance of Mary's youngest sister, were neither of them very stimulating to the gallantry of the Irishman.

It was a clear moonlight night—so clear, as to render the outline of every object as distinct as at noonday. Terence threw open the

door of the chaise, more impatient to return to the warm fire than to embrace the occupant; yet he did extend his arms with the familiarity of a brother, for the recollection of the many kisses he had pressed upon the cheek of little Ellen Grey, rendered her an object of affection, if not of interest. What, then, was his surprise, to behold the tall figure of one, whom he believed to be a stranger, rising from the seat. He drew back, and a sweet voice exclaimed, in softly modulated accents, "Mary, I am delighted to see you. Mr. Malone, I hope your sister is better; I promise myself great pleasure from cultivating her acquaintance."

Terence bowed, and thanked her; and after asking Mary in a whisper if this was really Ellen, offered his arm to conduct her into the house.

The young traveller was soon led to the fire, and as shawls, and cloaks, and tippets were removed one after another, a tall well-

formed and commanding figure stood before them, to which they felt it almost impossible to assign the name of Ellen Grey.

To see her face distinctly had already become an object of intense curiosity to Terence, and his anxiety was not long before it met with its reward.

The beauty of the welcome stranger was of a kind that needed no preparation from the toilet to render it *presentable.* Carelessly throwing aside her bonnet, she lightly shook her auburn ringlets, and parting them upon her forehead with her small white hand, displayed a face whose uncommon loveliness struck the beholders with silent admiration.

" Upon my word," exclaimed Harriet, after Mary had led Ellen from the room, " this sister of ours is a beautiful creature. What think you, Terence?"

" I perfectly agree with you," was the laconic reply.

" Polished manners, too, almost equal to

my own and Mary's. What is your opinion, Mr. Malone?"

"I should say, superior, to one, at least."

"To Mary's, of course. But where can she have got that sweet voice, and the dimples that play about her mouth?"

"By robbing her sister Harriet."

"Thank you, Mr. Malone, for your extraordinary gallantry. But come, talk to me like yourself. You are as cold and sarcastic as my father, just at the time when I should have expected a burst of your genuine Irish eloquence. Why, you do not praise Ellen's beauty with half the warmth I have known you bestow on my sister Mary."

"To me, Mary is both beautiful and good; Ellen is yet only beautiful."

"Then when Ellen is good to you, and makes you cough medicines and comforters, you will love her better than Mary?"

"I do not suppose she ever will; it is too early to form an opinion from mere appear-

ance, but Ellen Grey does not look to me like one of whom I could ever *ask* a kindness."

" But you would be the more grateful for a kindness granted without asking?"

" I do not know that, either."

" Come, Terence, you are acting my father still; I cannot bear to hear *you* talk in this dry cold manner. Now that there is no making comparisons with Ellen, tell me honestly, whether you think Mary or me the best looking."

" Harriet, if any other woman asked me such a question, I should say it was from envy, or coquetry; but you are too generous and too good humoured, to feel pain, when the truth is not altogether in your own favour. I will, therefore, tell you candidly, that to me there never was a countenance so beautiful as your sister Mary's."

" What! with her pale cheeks, and those bands of raven hair that lie upon her forehead like a vestal virgin's?"

"It is her vestal purity that I admire so much."

"Ah! now I understand you; you are charmed with the variety of a character in every way opposite to your own; and when you are tired of contemplating in the mirror the brilliance of your own wild eyes, you turn with peculiar satisfaction to Mary's downcast orbs."

"Perhaps you are right; but whatever the cause may be, there is a power in such eyes as Mary's, when she fixes them in earnest meaning upon your face—a power to call forth all that is true, and noble, and generous, in your nature, and to shame out all the evil, even from a heart like mine."

"What a pity Mary does not spend her life in gazing on your face!"

"Harriet, you may jest as you will; but if I had disgraced myself before the world, I would fly to Mary for protection, as the criminals of old were wont to shelter themselves

in the sanctuary—yet I would not meet her eyes. I should be certain of forgiveness, because her benevolence is such as to extend to the widest circle of human depravity; but the sanctity of such a mind condemns more powerfully than the accumulated contempt of the vulgar million."

Such were the genuine sentiments with which Mary Grey inspired her friend; and, bound to her from childhood by the indissoluble bond of mutual sympathy, he had learned to look upon her, as her character attained greater maturity of principle and judgment, almost as his guardian angel. By his personal prowess and undaunted spirit he had protected her when a young girl from insult and oppression, and since that time she had more than rewarded him by watching over the eccentricities of his wayward temper, and guarding his reputation in the opinion of others, with that untiring tenderness so especially characteristic of the love of woman. Not that Terence was by any

means such a character as Mary would have held up for a pattern of perfection; for, alas! how seldom do we love best what we most approve. It was sufficient for her condemnation that he led a useless life, besides which he had a thousand faults, all so clearly conspicuous to her discriminating eye, that one of the great objects of her life seemed to be to conceal them from others.

It is idle to say that personal appearance has little to do with our attachments. We leave it for philosophers to explain by what process red hair is converted into auburn, green eyes into blue, and a slight spinal curve into the line of beauty; but unquestionably either *à priori*, or *à posteriori*, personal appearance is of unspeakable importance; for never was the sentiment of love conceived within the human mind, without a real or ideal sense of beauty, or if not of beauty literally speaking, of an agreeable peculiarity of form and feature—of something surrounding one particu-

lar form as with a halo of light, separating it from all the world, and rendering it supremely admirable in its distinctness, if not in its colouring and symmetry.

Terence Malone had the tall agile figure which we naturally associate with skill and grace in all manly exercises. He had a broad open forehead, closely shaded with bright jetty curls, and eyes that looked from beneath their long dark lashes, like the sun in his noonday radiance, when he bursts from behind a dense and gloomy cloud; with a voice whose full clear tones were a natural and constant melody, and a laugh that might have awakened the spirit of merriment in the breast of a hoary sibyl. Besides which he was so active, so decided, and so prompt in his movements from one trifling occupation to another, that an air of manliness, and sometimes of importance, was imparted to his character, not sufficiently supported by the objects for which he lived.

As an adventurer, a sailor, or a military

commander, he would have been distinguished for his enterprise and valour; but immured as he was in the solitude of a secluded mansion, alike without useful occupation or laudable ambition, he was loved and valued for what he might have been, rather than for what he was; and Mary, whose partial fancy was perpetually placing him in situations more congenial to his nature, blamed his ill-judged education for thwarting his higher destiny. And since, with all her zeal to assist and serve, she could not point out any specific plan by which that destiny might be fulfilled, she was satisfied to pity, and possess him still. For it needs a highly sublime and spiritual attachment to devise schemes for depriving us, perhaps for ever, of the friends we love best; and more experienced moralists than Mary Grey have stretched their judgments a little to reconcile a case for its agreeableness, rather than its ultimate utility.

Thus associated as they had been from their

childhood, it would scarcely be possible to imagine a stronger bond of intimacy, than that existing between Terence and Mary; and if in her mind the intimacy partook more of tenderness, while it had the same character of strength, it was partly from her feminine nature, and partly from the many cold blights her childhood had received, having driven her affections to find their overflow in one distinct and partial channel.

It is the young warm hearts, cherished in a genial atmosphere, that by learning to love all things lovely and estimable in themselves, without fear, and without reserve, find copious outlets for the flow of natural affection; those who have been contracted in their sphere of action, and bound in by harsh and unrelenting severity, shrinking with terror from the open and salutary exercise of their feelings, learn to love in secret, and with a fervency that never yet was the accompaniment of human happiness.

CHAPTER XI.

Those who retain the warmth of their feelings under circumstances of restraint and unnatural severity, sometimes enjoy, with intense emotion, the few brief moments of unreserved and social intercourse which their lives afford. Thus the party at Welbourne House met around a blazing hearth, with hearts whose unwonted freedom seemed sufficient of itself to constitute them happy.

Cathleen was present, for her health was still such as to permit her the indulgence of society, while its delicacy heightened the interest which her beauty, her refinement, her accomplishments, and her gentle manners diffused

around her; and she sat within the cheerful circle, so fondly cherished, so guarded, and so beloved by all, as to look almost like the idol to whom their devotions were addressed.

Ellen Grey was a beauty of a totally different character; and if she excited less tenderness, she commanded more admiration. Not that her personal loveliness alone would have done this, but she had a sweet voice, a winning smile, with polished and persuasive manners, that won insensibly upon those around her; and Mary gazed upon her with the pride and fondness of a mother, whose heart has been oppressed with anxiety for one beloved object, and who meets at last with the full repayment of her solicitude—the entire fulfilment of her warmest wishes.

"We are all very happy," said Harriet, drawing in her chair, and stirring the fire for the twentieth time; "almost too happy to be interesting. What say you, Allan, to a dash of melancholy amongst our felicity: for you sit

in the sunshine of those golden tresses, as if you anticipated neither cloud nor twilight."

"If *you* wish for melancholy, Harriet, it is a thousand pities you should not be gratified. For my part, I have a little too much of it sometimes."

"I have hardly hit upon the right word," continued Harriet; "melancholy is too tame, too monotonous, for my taste. I want something to create tremors, and palpitations, and all that sort of thing—something that would seem to mingle in its contradictious elements, the storm that rages without, and the quiet comfort that glows within. Suppose you and I, Terence, were to get up a little love for each other, and hang our heads and look pensive, just for variety."

"Ah, Harriet," replied Terence, "I should have been in love with you long since, if I had suspected you of possessing a heart."

Harriet fixed her eyes upon the blazing fire, and after looking serious for the space of one

entire minute, sighed deeply, and then, turning with a smile to Terence, addressed him in her wonted manner.

"Terence, if you had lived beneath my father's roof, you would have been glad, like me, to be exempt from that inconvenient appendage to your person. If hearts had never been invented, would Mary look so prematurely grave? would Allan sigh his soul away in sonnets? would Cathleen be so doted upon that we (or rather you) tremble if the north wind does but touch her cheek? Or would Ellen be in danger of losing her fresh bright bloom? No, Terence, you and I (for I will have companionship in my deficiency) are infinitely safer without hearts. We shall sit in our easy chairs, watching the ravages of sensibility upon more fragile forms, and welcome old age without a wrinkle and without a care."

Terence had followed her remarks from one individual to another; and when she threat-

ened the young bright bloom of Ellen, his eye dwelt for a moment upon the lovely girl, with an interest which Mary could not but observe ; while she inwardly thanked him for feeling so kindly, and so much as she did, for her sister.

And thus the evening passed away, in the mutual intercourse of congenial minds ; nor did the party separate until Allan and Cathleen had sung together some of Ireland's charmed lays, and given the votive offering of two singularly sweet and harmonious voices, to the bard, whose genius is so peculiarly calculated for weaving the chain of sympathy between young hearts, and bathing them in floods of light—of happiness—of tears.

The two days of perfect cordiality and freedom were enjoyed by the young party at Welbourne House with an avidity scarcely to be understood by those whose pleasures have been dealt out to them with a more liberal hand. On the following morning Stephen Grey returned, and his presence brought its

usual accompaniment of silence and restraint. It is scarcely possible that actual fear should continue to prevail over minds whose maturity had necessarily produced a degree of mental independence; but there were recollections and associations which spread around them a kind of imaginary pall, and they shrunk from exposing their sentiments and feelings to one, who, with a predisposition to behold them in an unfavourable light, was wholly incapable of understanding from what class of feelings they arose.

"Home is just what it always was," said Harriet to her sister Mary. "I came back with a strong determination not to fear my father, but the very sound of his step in the hall makes my spirit sink within me, and I begin immediately to ask myself what I am doing, or what I have done, that he can possibly find fault with."

"And yet he is not often angry with us now," said Mary.

"No," replied her sister, "but which of us can recollect the time when he noticed any little sacrifice we made to please him, or rewarded us with one expression of genuine pleasure when we did our best? To escape his anger was the highest felicity to which we ever aspired, and I feel that if I lived at home, I should just deceive, and act over again my former part."

"But are you happy with my aunt, Harriet?"

"Yes, happy in a certain way. She is extremely generous, and I spend her money delightfully; but I confess I am sometimes a little tired of her common-place remarks, and of the vulgar ambition that has no higher aim than to vie with the mayor's wife in furniture and dress."

"And you can really reconcile yourself to this kind of life, Harriet?"

"Why, where else can I live? Not at home, most assuredly; for if my father did not

actually turn me out of doors, I could never confine my expenditure to his yearly allowance, or exist within the narrow limits of his household rules. Sometimes I think very seriously of marrying, if I had but the good fortune to captivate a man of ample means. What do you say to this plan of escape, Mary? Would you accept the proposals of a good-natured man, who could maintain you in affluence?"

"I would rather starve than marry a man I could not love."

"Ah! that is all because you have a heart. It does very well for you to talk in this way, and would sound very fine in one of Allan's books; but with me, you know, the case is quite different."

"There is such a thing, Harriet, as finding out you have a heart when it is too late."

"That is another of your romantic notions. Depend upon it, Mary, hearts do not spring up like seeds which can remain hid in the

earth, until favouring circumstances promote their growth. Besides, Terence says I have no heart, and I think, had I possessed one, I should almost have loved him too well, for he is a handsome noble-hearted fellow. Is he not, Mary?"

"He is, indeed, good-hearted."

"And not that only. There is something about him which always makes one feel his presence when he is near, and a sensible loss when he goes away. What is it, do you think, Mary?"

All this was said with an arch smile, and a searching look, that brought the deepest crimson into Mary's face; and feeling that she had no refuge from her sister's raillery, she freely joined her laugh, and then resumed the all-important subject of their former conversation; for the remarks so heedlessly let fall by Harriet, had awakened her fears lest she might be induced to act upon the liberal sentiments she maintained in reference to the duties of marriage.

"But you do not seriously mean what you say?" she gravely inquired of her sister. "You do not mean that you could really marry for the sake of an establishment?"

"Why the truth is this," replied Harriet. "My aunt is one of those unscrupulous people, who can freely talk in one's presence about the advantage of *getting one off*—I think that is the favourite expression with such people."

"It is an expression," replied Mary, with some indignation, "that always makes me shrink within myself, and feel, even when I hear it applied to others, as if not only my own family, but the world at large, were grudging me what they consider as the bread of idleness. Is it not enough that women are subjected, from the cradle to the grave, to as many of the ills of life as their weakness is able to sustain, but they must be perpetually reminded that they hang as a burden upon society, until one individual is bound by the law of the land to provide them food and clothing for life!"

"Well, this is the only thing that troubles me. My aunt is generous and kind, but her kindness is perpetually anticipating the future; and though she will not hear of my living at home, where she knows I am not happy, she wants the delicacy to conceal the relief it will be to her when I am well provided for."

"Come back and live with us then, dear Harriet. I cannot bear that you should be exposed to such unfeeling remarks."

"No, Mary, it is easier for me to bear the plain speaking of such people, than the cold averted eye of a father who does not love me."

"But he does love you in his heart, Harriet."

"You say right. In his heart only; for I should be at a loss to discover it in his actions."

"But Allan loves you, and Ellen, and myself.—If you will but come back, we will all endeavour to made your home more happy."

"Between ourselves, Mary, I doubt whether this charming sister of ours has much love

to spare for any one. She is so beautiful, and smiles and speaks so sweetly, that we are all captivated; but show me the instance in which she has studied to make others happy, unless by smiling upon them. I do not speak for myself. She owes me nothing, except perhaps a box on the ear, for the tyranny exercised over her childhood; but she is not what she ought to be to you. Indeed, Mary, she is not."

"You are very severe, Harriet. She has been spoiled by my over indulgence, but she is—she must be affectionate."

"Yes, if affection consists in embraces and pretty speeches, I grant that she is; but for my own part, rather than fold my arms around your neck and kiss you as she does, I would help you sometimes to sew for my father and brothers, or stay at home to receive my father in the evening, while you walked out with Terence. You smile, Mary, because you think I am condemning myself, as well as Ellen. To the charge of neglect, and want of conside-

ration for you, I plead guilty; but not to that of *pretended* affection. No, Mary, when that precious seed grows up within me, which you sentimental people call a heart, I will prove my affection by real services, not by mere expressions of tenderness and love."

It was indeed but too true as Harriet had remarked, Ellen Grey was neither capable of feeling in herself, or of appreciating in others, those deep emotions out of which arise the most noble and disinterested actions. Her infancy had been so fondly cherished, that she had learned to exercise without the reserve of some other members of her family, all the outward attributes of affection; and while they imparted an interesting and delightful softness to her manners, they served to conceal the void that lay beneath.

Something of this kind had been hinted at by Catherine Lee in her letters to Mary.

"Were I," said she, "to assume the unfriendly office of pointing out Ellen's faults, I

should certainly be at a loss what to say; yet I cannot think that I should do my duty to my dearest friend, without damping her ardent expectations, by warning her that Ellen is not like herself; and that she may look in vain to this beloved sister, for the glowing sympathy, the deep interest, and the cordial kindness, that sweeten all our domestic duties."

Mary dwelt upon this letter, read it again and again, and then committed it to the flames, persuading herself that it was impossible there should be any deficiency in the heart of her favourite sister; but when Harriet again left them, and the young party was divided into two couples, and one who walked or sat alone, Mary could not help feeling that she was that lonely one much more frequently than either Cathleen or Ellen; yet she blamed no one—envied no one, but satisfied herself with thinking that it was right it should be so; and when the two cheerful couples wandered away for their evening walk, she would take her

work and sit beside her father, happy if she could prevent his feeling the loneliness with which her own heart was oppressed.

There is nothing that makes us so kindly disposed to others, as the mingling of a slight degree of pain with our own experience; and when we can do nothing to lighten our own load of care, the noble and generous mind will find fresh stimulus in its sufferings for seeking to lighten that of others.

As time passed on, however, Mary became more reconciled to her peculiar situation. Perhaps it was, that driven from one post of confidence to another, she learned to extract consolation from sources unknown before, and thus pleased herself for awhile with their novelty, unconscious that the floods were gaining upon her, and that, of these resources, she might soon be driven to the last. If, however, her individual enjoyments were less numerous than before, they became daily more intense. Terence had lost his regular spirits, and was

no longer like himself. Subject to alternate bursts of merriment and fits of sadness, he seemed more dependent than ever upon Mary, and would sometimes tear himself away from other society to walk or sit with her alone, as if his heart was labouring with some hidden grief, which he longed to communicate, but knew not how.

Let no man despair of winning a woman's love, if with a moderate degree of liking, he can make her believe that she is the only human being in whom it is possible for him freely and fully to confide—the one congenial spirit who can appreciate the lights and shadows of his own character—the guardian angel commissioned with an especial embassy to watch over him for good.

Mary knew that whatever were the superior attractions of others, she was, as far as a weak and humble-minded woman might be, this confidant to Terence; and therefore she could leave him cheerfully to the society that

was suited to his happier moments, secure that he would fly to her when his heart was overpowered with grief; and though ignorant of the precise nature of the cares which preyed upon him, it was not difficult to wait in patience for the hour of farther explanation while certain that that hour would be shared with her alone.

Sometimes Mary concluded it must be troubles of a pecuniary nature that weighed down his joyous spirit; but he had ever treated money with a childish recklessness, and there was little additional cause for caring for it now. Sometimes she thought it must be the situation of his sister, who, instead of gaining strength with the advance of summer, grew more and more delicate, and after resigning first one indulgence, and then another, was at length obliged to confine herself to the circle of the Abbey garden for her daily exercise. But if this was the grief to which Terence yielded, why did he not name it

freely, instead of alluding mysteriously to something he could not, dared not, disclose?

At last Mary's conjectures settled into the conviction that his secret cause of anxiety must be entirely of a pecuniary nature; and as such she felt a natural repugnance to extorting a confidence that was not freely granted; and as Terence now held frequent communication with his lawyers, and often walked to the neighbouring village in order that he might receive his expected letters half an hour earlier, her increasing suspicions received their final confirmation, by his declaring his intention of setting out immediately for London, that he might ascertain with greater certainty the real state of his affairs.

It was a strange sensation to Mary to be thus suddenly deprived of the untiring society of one who had been so uniformly friendly and familiar as Terence; and she felt for the first time in her life how tremendous a void

his continued absence would create. Accustomed as she had been to appeal to him in every trifling emergency, to meet his cheerful smile as regularly as she met the light of day, and to welcome the glad tones of his voice, as if they were the natural music of her own imagination; she now acknowledged to herself, but not without a blush of shame, how entirely the charm of her existence depended upon this beloved friend. Oppressed with the painful apprehensions this new conviction brought along with it, she turned her pensive gaze towards the Abbey walls. They looked vacant, and stripped of all their interest; and she met the bright dawn of each returning morn, as if it only ushered in a blank and wearisome day.

It was not long, however, that Mary had to chide herself for this insensibility to present things. Terence returned as abruptly and impatiently as he had set out, and startled Ellen almost into fits by entering the garden

of the Hall after its sober proprietor had retired to rest, and tapping gently at the window of the little parlour the young people used to call their own.

They knew the signal, and hastily throwing open the sash, the next moment the welcome visitant had bounded in; and after having embraced them both with the familiarity of a brother, stood holding a hand of each, but with a look of tenderness directed towards Ellen, for which her alarm sufficiently accounted.

"Mary," said he, as soon as the object of his solicitude had recovered from the shock, "congratulate me upon my good fortune. I cannot enter into particulars just now, but I shall yet be an independent man!"

"What!" said Mary, "is this intricate affair at last concluded?"

"No, not exactly signed and sealed. But you must come to the Abbey to-morrow evening, and I will tell you all I understand about

it. I have not seen either Cathleen or Allan yet, but suppose I shall find them together, like substance and shadow. Good night once more. We shall all be happy yet!"

He accompanied these words with the pressure of one fair hand—a pressure which the other did not feel; and then disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

The next evening was one of unwonted enjoyment to the whole party. It was not often that Mary deserted her father on these occasions, but the welcome return of Terence, and the idea that he had some good tidings to communicate, rendered the temptation too strong even for her fortitude; and though she lingered last of all, and even poured out her father's tea before she left him; after she had seen him draw his chair back to its accustomed place, take out his spectacles, and commence the silent reading of a London newspaper, she passed softly through the hall, and then pursued her solitary way across the fields, perhaps

with more secret satisfaction then she had ever felt before.

Terence sprung to meet her, from a sofa on which he had been seated between Cathleen and Ellen. He received her with his wonted manner, for it was his custom never to permit her to enter the room where he was, without some respectful notice of her presence; and even in her father's house when she withdrew from the cheerful circle to seat herself silently and dutifully beside him, that he might not feel alone or deserted by his children, Terence used to follow her to the door, and would sometimes detain her there, with earnest entreaties that she would soon return; as if he felt an absolute want of something, when he heard and saw her not.

There was consequently nothing extraordinary in his present welcome, unless Mary's feelings made it so, or unless her few days' want of his pointed and delicate attentions had made them more valuable; but certainly the

idea did cross her mind that she had never seen him look so handsome, or heard him speak so kindly before; and though he placed her in the vacant chair that stood apart, his conversation was addressed to her as if she alone could fully understand his thoughts, and appreciate his feelings.

In the course of the evening he explained what were the circumstances that gave a more auspicious character to the aspect of his affairs, while he held in his hand a letter from the potent pen of a distinguished counsellor, strongly corroborating his hopes. And although there was not one individual present who understood more than he did himself of the mazy intricacies of the law, they were all so credulous of good—so eager to magnify every favourable omen, that before they separated for the night, their wishes had assumed the nature of sanguine expectations, from the fulfilment of which they seemed to be equally anticipating happiness, regardless of all calculations upon their individual share.

As Stephen Grey was in the habit of closing his doors at an early hour, and Cathleen too looked pale and weary after the excitement of a lengthened visit, Mary and her sister rose to say good night, all the party agreeing that they had seldom enjoyed an evening more than this—so much does the glow of ardent hope, when shared by those we love, exceed, in the real enjoyment it produces, the exercise of the most brilliant powers of conversation.

"Allan," said Terence, as they left the door, and trod upon the mossy turf, where the clear calm moonlight lay like a silver carpet, "you must take charge of your sister Ellen to-night. I have a word for Mary's private ear, which if it should prove more than a monosyllable, may perhaps detain her later than your father's hour of retiring. You will therefore invent the best excuse you can, and wait for her in the parlour until you hear my signal at the window."

Mary knew not why this charge should raise the glowing crimson, though unseen,

to her cheeks, since Terence was addicted to the trick of making people feel awkward and embarrassed; and deeming it only one of his idle and familiar jests, she prepared to follow her brother and sister along the path to her father's door.

"Not that way," said Terence, gently taking her hand in his, and leading her down to the side of the river.

"It is only to behold this beautiful scene," said Mary to herself; yet she trembled all over, and a strange undefinable apprehension filled her heart.

"Mary," said he, "you are the best friend I have in the world;" and he would have imprinted a kiss upon her glowing cheek, but the lateness of the hour, and the loneliness of their situation, gave an air of impropriety to his Irish gallantry, which Mary thought it incumbent upon her to check.

"Nay, do not shun me now," said Terence, "when I am more in need than ever of that

confidence—that affection in which you yourself have taught me to conclude."

Mary could not answer. She saw nothing—heard nothing with distinctness. Shecarcely even knew that she was standing by the side of the man she loved best in the world, gazing by moonlight on the bright surface of a gently gliding river, where the willows dipped their weeping branches, and raised a silvery margin around the bed of their own deep shadows reflected in the silent wave. She scarcely knew that she was clinging like a blind enthusiast to one distinct and happy thought, which told her that this beloved friend was about to whisper into her attentive ear a secret intimately connected with his fate—perhaps with hers, but sacred from all the world beside. She scarcely knew whether duty bade her stay and listen, or fly the imaginary dangers of this bewildering scene.

"Mary," said Terence again, "you know my situation—you know my heart; but you

are scarcely conscious of its capability of loving. To you I have confided every secret of my life but one. Yet that I think you must have guessed."

Mary now drew her hand away from the arm on which she had been leaning, for she trembled so violently, that she was fearful of betraying her emotion.

Terence proceeded; "You are cold and distant with me to-night, Mary. What can this altered manner mean? Have you ever loved me, or have I only deceived myself with a bright and blissful dream?"

"You know my friendship for you, Terence —what it has been, and ever will be in every situation, and through every circumstance of life."

"Then prove it by granting, this night, the greatest kindness you ever yet conferred upon me."

"Proceed," said Mary, with a voice she was scarcely able to command.

"To you who know my heart so well, I

need not explain either the anxieties that perplex me every hour, or the anticipated loneliness that lies before me. You must know, too, that a temperament like mine is liable to form strong attachments; and what, Mary," he exclaimed, once more seizing her hand, "if I have dared to love where there is the least probability of a happy termination to my wishes, where inborn prejudice plants an iron barrier between me and hope, and where my poverty is regarded as a crime, rather than a misfortune—in short, Mary, for I must speak decidedly to the point, where your iron-hearted father would brand me as a madman, were I even on my knees to ask the blessing of his daughter's hand!"

As Terence uttered the last words, he bent his burning forehead upon Mary's shoulder, and she heard no sound but the agonized and convulsive sighs that choked his utterance.

Mary could not speak. She had no words to express the mingled emotions which crowded together, and oppressed her soul; but she

answered in the language of that soul, by a slight and gentle pressure of the hand which held her own.

As soon as Terence recovered his self-possession, he went on. "The favour I have to ask of you, Mary—the favour that will lay me under a debt of everlasting gratitude, is that you will intercede with your father on my behalf. It would strike the death-blow to my hopes at once, should I presume to speak, and with Ellen it is a point of delicacy to be silent."

The hand which Terence held became cold and motionless as marble, and Mary in another moment would have sunk upon the ground, but that the sudden reaction of her feelings brought a blush of burning shame into her ghastly cheeks—of shame, that she had not rightly interpreted the meaning of her friend—shame, that she might possibly have betrayed the strange hallucination of her mind—and shame, that she had dared to dream of a felicity allotted to another.

We do not—we cannot, in one moment

arrive at a full conviction of the severity of the blow which has struck the root of our fondest hopes. There are innumerable functions of the mind that must have time to operate—to bring in their fuel to the fire of destruction, before we can know the extent of our calamity; and ere the crowning measure is added to our draught of bitterness, we often experience a power to act with firmness and decision, which astonishes us on after-thought, when we retire into our own chambers, and call upon the very walls to pity us.

Mary was fully capable of speaking, if not of feeling, all which duty and strict propriety required in this moment of mysterious self-possession; and she answered distinctly, "What is it you ask of me, Terence? Tell me all, and I will do my best to serve you."

Fortunately for Mary, her companion had been too much absorbed by his own emotions to observe any thing extraordinary in her manner. He had thought her less affectionate —less warmly interested in his happiness than

usual; but such was his entire reliance upon her *sisterly* regard, that the idea never for one moment flitted across his mind, that Mary could be less sanguine than himself in promoting his union with her sister.

"Tell me," said she again with firm, though hurried voice, "in what way you wish me to act. Ellen—my sister, is of course aware of your having communicated with me on this subject."

"It was by her own proposition that I detained you here to-night. But how you can proceed so as to soften your father's prejudices in my favour, is for you, if for any one on earth, to decide. Something may perhaps be done by explaining to him the result of my late journey to town;" and here Terence entered into a circumstantial detail of his transactions with the gentlemen of the law, appealing to his mute companion at the close of every sentence, to know whether she understood him.

"Perfectly," was the uniform and prompt

reply, until nothing farther remained to be explained; when Terence placed the important letter in Mary's hand, and led her to her father's door.

"Mary!" exclaimed Allan, when he met his sister with the lamp in his hand, "What has happened to you?"

"Nothing," said Mary, shivering, "but the air is damp and cold, and we have staid too long by the river side."

Allan was not satisfied, yet, fearing to pursue the subject too far, he extended his hand to his sister, who, after pressing upon his forehead her farewell kiss, retired in silence to her own chamber.

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